

FACING THE FAMILY : GROUP PORTRAITS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
IDENTITY WITHIN EARLY MODERN FAMILIES

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis draws together material and archival sources to investigate the long-overlooked portraits of English provincial gentry families commissioned between *c.*1550 and *c.*1680. Specifically, its focus is on portraits of family groups where more than one generation, connected through blood or kinship, is depicted in the same composition. The thesis identifies these as a coherent genre for the first time and examines the ways in which the gentry used such paintings to establish familial legacy and heritage for future generations.

This thesis explains how these portraits respond to, and reflect, family memory and narratives, social networks, local histories, religious observance and artistic developments. They are important because the family, as the basic unit of society, was essential for the formation and transmission of belief and identity, and the place where children were socialised. The portraits simultaneously reflect broad social trends while also containing personal messages about the lives and relationships of individual families which were specific to their own particular place and time. The thesis argues for the significance of visual artworks and especially this genre of painting, in the construction of gentry status and self-fashioning over this key period of social change.

## **DEDICATION**

For my grandchildren

Sophie, Emily, Arthur and Skye

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis draws together two strands of historical enquiry, the material and the archival. Its main sources are the under-researched portraits of English provincial gentry families which were commissioned between *c.* 1550 and *c.* 1680; analysis of these artworks is supported with textual sources from family and regional archives.<sup>1</sup> It will be demonstrated that the integration of art-historical approaches with historical techniques shows these portraits to be an important but under-utilised source of evidence for the historian. The specific focus of the thesis is on painted portraits of family groups where more than one generation, connected through ties of blood or kinship, is depicted in the same pictorial space.<sup>2</sup> About seventy portraits have been identified as a coherent group here for the first time.<sup>3</sup> While the thesis of necessity positions individual families whose portraits have their own personal and private meanings at its centre, it also addresses more general questions about the relationships between gentry status, faith, inter-generational and gender relationships and the role of portraits in memorialising virtue and linking generations.

Historically, family portraits were important sites of memory, which related closely to regional and county histories and their production intersected with regional, cultural, social and economic contexts including artists, their workshops and artistic practices, gentry families and their geographic and social networks. This gives these portraits an important place in English local history as well as in national art history. While the geographic focus of these portraits is on families whose principal home was in the English

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest portrait is English School, *Alice Barnham and Her Sons Martin and Steven*, 1557, oil on panel, Berger Collection, Denver, USA; among the latest are: John Michael Wright, *Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot*, 1675-6, oil on canvas, Tate.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes called easel paintings.

<sup>3</sup> These are distinct from the more usual portraits of individual members of the same family. This thesis excludes portraits of groups of children without their parents or portraits of married couples. Occasionally portraits depict members of the wider household including servants. It is obviously impossible for the list to be comprehensive and there are no doubt many more examples in private collections to be recorded.



provinces, it will become apparent that many had close associations with the capital, the continent and the wider world, which meant that patrons and artists were exposed to a wide range of technical and artistic influences.<sup>4</sup> While the majority of the portraits were executed on canvas or board and designed to be hung in domestic spaces, they also include some portraits, painted on stone or other flat surfaces, which were displayed in churches. Analysis of textual sources often challenges and disrupts the carefully controlled compositions to offer a fuller account of the lives of particular families as well as a greater understanding of how such artworks functioned within strategies of self-fashioning.

#### **a. Definitions: the gentry, group portraits and collective identity**

As Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes indicate, defining the gentry is complex since the boundaries between social groups in the early modern period were flexible and permeable.<sup>5</sup> The families whose portraits are the focus of this thesis exemplify this and in line with their observations, the ‘gentry family’ is defined here as a man, and by extension his family, who was entitled to bear arms and live without manual labour.<sup>6</sup> To these criteria should be added possession of land, local esteem, long lineage, wealth and office holding. Although their fortunes fluctuated, most of the families whose portraits are considered here, had, or sought this condition and their portraits offered a visual language for their claims to status and identity. For some, like the Tasburghs (Fig.0:2) the commissioning of their portrait in 1615, with its flamboyant display of costume, marked the high point of their social and economic fortunes since within a generation they had lost

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<sup>4</sup> For example, trading families like the Saltonstalls from Essex, had houses in London and trade links around the world century. See Ian Warren, 'London's Cultural Impact on the English Gentry: The Case of Worcestershire, c. 1580-1690', *Midland History*, 33 (2008), pp. 156-78; see also Bronwen Wilson, 'The Renaissance Portrait: From Resemblance to Representation', in *The Renaissance World*, ed. by J. Jeffries Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 452 and 471.

<sup>5</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

both their fortune and their home.<sup>7</sup> Other families, like the Lucys (Chapter Two case study 1) were more secure in their gentle status, possessing all the attributes of gentility and indeed Sir Thomas Lucy is sometimes seen as the ideal gentleman, ‘a model of learned gentility’.<sup>8</sup>

Through strategic marriage and good economic management, families like the Burdetts (Chapter Two Case Study 2), were able to move into the ranks of the aristocracy.<sup>9</sup> Their portrait, probably commissioned to celebrate Sir Thomas’s elevation to the baronetcy, marked an important moment in their ascent. A flexible definition of gentility in this thesis has allowed for the inclusion of lower ranked families such as the Chorleys (Fig. 5:12) who were members of a professional family whose prestige grew through local office holding, judicious marriage and a successful business.

Central though it is in this thesis, defining the word ‘portrait’ is also not straightforward because its meaning changes with time. As Shearer West notes, portraits are more than simple naturalistic likenesses of a person or group of people, rather they engage with inconsistent and symbolic notions of identity and are expressive of their period and the circumstances of their production.<sup>10</sup> A useful definition for the purpose of this thesis is offered by Joanna Woodall who draws together naturalistic or mimetic portraits with symbolic ways of representing both individual and collective identity, through for example coats of arms or emblems of office or occupation.<sup>11</sup> In line with Marcia Pointon, the term ‘portraiture’ is used here to refer to all the practices connected

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<sup>7</sup> Nesta Evans, 'The Tasburghs of South Elmham: The Rise and Fall of a Suffolk Gentry Family', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 34 (1980), p. 277.

<sup>8</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 292.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Arthur Crisp, (ed.) 'Pedigree of Burdett of Foremark of Co. Derby, Baronets', in *Visitation of England and Wales*, by (Institute of Historical Research: Privately published, 1913), pp. 129-34; by the eighteenth century the family had married into the family of the Dukes of Rutland, *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Joanna Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.1.

with depicting human subjects including commissioning, collecting and displaying portraits.<sup>12</sup> Both Robert Tittler and Bronwen Wilson draw attention to the mutable nature of portraiture as it responds to the changing status of its subjects as well as to other social priorities and religious changes through time. It is to this mutability that the abilities, training and materials of artists were tailored.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of 'identity' is also complex and contested but here, following Stephen Greenblatt's classic study *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, it indicates a sense of personality, 'personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires'.<sup>14</sup> According to Greenblatt the sense of individual identity, which he identifies as evident in literature from about the sixteenth century, was malleable and could be shaped. The result, he claimed was an 'increased [Tudor] self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process' which he called 'Renaissance self-fashioning'.<sup>15</sup> Greenblatt argues that after about 1500 individuals had less autonomy in self-fashioning because social institutions such as the family, the state and the church imposed external discipline on subjects.<sup>16</sup> Mary Rogers, West and others have extended Greenblatt's concept to include the fashioning of identity through portraiture and other forms of material culture.<sup>17</sup> Rogers in particular notes that the energetic search for new

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<sup>12</sup> Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Wilson, 'The Renaissance Portrait', p 454, Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 2 'English Portraiture in Context', pp. 17-39.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2. Recent art-historical debates, have understood the term 'identity' to include approaches which highlight marginalised social groups, often non-elites, whose concerns were over looked by earlier scholars for example, gender or racial identity: Meyer, Richard, 'Identity', in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 345.

<sup>16</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Rogers, (ed.), *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), xiii-xiv.; Woods-Marsden, Joanna, 'Introduction: Collective Identity/Individual Identity', in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. by Mary Rogers (Aldershot and Vermont: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 1-15; West, *Portraiture*, p. 11.

identities during the Tudor and Elizabethan periods was ‘stimulated by the desire to acquire social prestige, political security, or shifts in religious allegiance.’<sup>18</sup> With the flourishing of secular portraiture in England in the second half of the sixteenth century, portraits became key mechanisms by which to assert new social, spiritual and material identities. Like sculpted tomb monuments in churches, portraits acted as exemplars for the benefit of living and future generations, to act as a locus for grief and keep the memory of the deceased alive. Above all as Franciscus Junius, librarian to the Earl of Arundel was aware, portraits and statues of eminent individuals were designed to encourage others to imitate their virtue.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis is predicated on the idea that identity can be understood not only in relation to individuals but to groups such as social, religious or occupational groups and, particularly, to families. As Heal and Holmes suggest, because of their diversity, the gentry initially appear to be a social group with a weak sense of collective identity, united mainly by their reliance on land and the common set of political and legal beliefs which related to it.<sup>20</sup> However, on close examination they claim the gentry did maintain a coherent sense of group identity through their adherence to the unwritten code which embodied the elusive qualities of ‘gentility’.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the criteria discussed above, these qualities included piety, virtue, good household care, long lineage and ‘civility’, all of which inform the visual vocabulary of their portraits. Indeed, the very actions of commissioning, displaying, viewing and collecting portraits was part of the process which unified, shaped and defined the gentry. For the gentry, marriage, family and the production of a male heir

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<sup>18</sup> Rogers, (ed.), *Fashioning Identities*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>19</sup> See: Margaret Aston, ‘Gods, Saints, and Reformers: Portraiture and Protestant England’, in *Albion’s Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

were essential for the transmission of property and their economic survival and it is this essential relationship between gentry status, the qualities of gentility and the nature of their family life which makes their portraits an important area of historical inquiry. As the subsequent chapters will argue, families used portraits, on the one hand to define and promote their own unique identity, and on the other, to forge links between similarly ranked families with whom they shared religious or political views.

Expressions of collective identity were at the heart of family group portraits since one of their functions was to unify the group around a common set of aspirations and beliefs and it was therefore important to display the family as a cohesive whole, displaying pride in their past and confidence in their future. However, group portraits, as Richard Brilliant observes, pose specific problems for artists, because they are not merely portraits of individuals grouped together, rather they depict individuals in relationship to one another whose individuality contributes to the coherence of the group.<sup>22</sup> He notes: 'Group portraits are not random collections of persons but deliberate constructions of the significant relations among them, ...'.<sup>23</sup> The interaction between members of the group is key to understanding family portraits' generational, emotional and gender relationships and the power dynamics at play among them. Each member of the group performs his or her role, not only to the viewer and artist but to other members of the family, but always within a composition which stresses unity. This might be done by emphasising facial likeness, as for example the faces of the two sons of Sir Percyval Hart (Fig.0:1) which points to their genetic link. Near identical costume or gestures can also be used to imply family cohesion, seen for example in the portrait of the Tasburgh group where each family

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, (London: Reaktion, 1991), pp. 92-93; West, *Portraiture*, pp. 105-127.

<sup>23</sup> Brilliant, *Portraiture*, pp. 92-93.

member is depicted with individuality while the unity of the group is expressed through facial similarity, a unified colour palette, costume and gesture (Fig. 0:2).



Figure 0:1 Unknown artist, *Sir Percyvall Hart and sons*, 1575, oil on panel, Lullingstone Castle, Kent



Figure 0:2 English School, *The Tasburgh Group, Lettice Cressy, Lady Tasburgh of Bodney, Norfolk and her Children*, c. 1615, oil on panel, location unknown

## **b. Scope of the thesis**

By integrating archival family sources with the portraits this thesis will specifically discuss beliefs about the ‘ideal’ gentry family, changing notions of gentle status, aspects of familial piety and attitudes to death and memorialisation. It will also be argued that portraits were implicated in the construction of gender and rank which underpinned the strict hierarchical nature of early-modern society and determined the place of individuals both within the family and society.

This thesis covers a time span of approximately one hundred and thirty years, between c.1550 and c.1680, a dynamic period distinguished by many contradictory social, religious and artistic developments, including changes in religious beliefs and practices and social change. The emergence of secular portraiture in England was an event to which

Robert Tittler assigns the date 1540, in recognition of the importance of Hans Holbein's arrival in the English court that year.<sup>24</sup> However it was not until ten years later that portraits of families below the ranks of the aristocracy emerge in substantial numbers which is why this thesis takes 1550 as its start date.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the earliest family group portraits are by Holbein himself. These are the lost portrait of Thomas More and his family of c.1527 and the portrait of *Thomas Godsalve of Norwich and his son, John*, of 1528. While these early portraits will be mentioned, their dates are exceptional and it was not until the middle decades of the sixteenth century that portraits of family groups appear in any numbers.<sup>26</sup>

The rationale for the end date of this thesis relies on a shift in the style and language of family portraiture towards the smaller scale, informal 'conversation pieces', popular in the eighteenth century which survive in considerable numbers.<sup>27</sup> While they share some characteristics with earlier portraits, these are less formal than earlier family groups and sitters are shown in animated poses, interacting with one another while engaged in genteel occupations such as taking tea or playing games. The settings are generally domestic or rural and patrons came from the emerging professional middle classes as much as from the gentry.

### **c. Historiography**

This thesis is not intended as a catalogue of all group portraits of the English provincial gentry commissioned between 1550 and the closing years of the seventeenth century,

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<sup>24</sup> Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics*, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Holbein the Younger, Study for the Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More, c. 1527, pen and brush in black on top of chalk sketch, 38cms x 52 cms, Kupferstichkabinett, Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel, the portrait of Thomas Godsalve and his son are also of this early date: Hans Holbein the Younger, *Thomas Godsalve of Norwich and his son, John*, 1528, oil on canvas, Gemäldergalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, Germany.

<sup>27</sup> Kate Retford, 'The Conversation Piece', *Burlington Magazine*, 151 (2009), pp. 715-717.



rather, it builds on recent scholarly work which has drawn attention to their rich potential.<sup>28</sup> Until the early years of the twenty-first century, even important standard accounts of portraiture, such as West's *Portraiture* and Woodall's *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* marginalised the work of the mainly unnamed, English provincial artists and their non-aristocratic sitters.<sup>29</sup> Like earlier generations of scholars, their traditional approach privileges continental, specifically Italian Renaissance or Dutch artists, over English native ones. In recent years, however, scholars from a range of disciplines have begun to remedy this, including and perhaps especially Robert Tittler and Tarnya Cooper who address the subject from the perspectives of social and art history respectively, reflecting their wide interests in material culture and application of interdisciplinary approaches. This has led to a wider appreciation of English-born artists whose painterly styles and conventions were previously labelled 'naïve' or inferior by comparison to their continental counterparts.<sup>30</sup> Both scholars found the universities, civic halls, London liveries and provincial guildhalls provided abundant quantities of the kinds of portraits they sought, including of sitters drawn from professional ranks, civic officials and lawyers. However, neither have focussed attention on group portraits.

Recent scholarly interest in the history of the family and its material culture has explored ways in which domestic spaces, their decoration and associated material objects were used to express aspects of familial distinctiveness, particularly in areas such as

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics*; Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012); Roy Strong, 'Forgotten Faces: Regional History and Regional Portraiture', *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), pp. 43-57.

<sup>29</sup> West, *Portraiture*; Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Tittler, 'Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567', *Northern History*, 52 (2015), pp. 182-99; Tittler, 'Portraiture and Memory Amongst the Middling Elites in Post-Reformation England', in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, ed. by Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (Surrey, England and Vermont, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 37-57.

confessional identity and social status. This turn towards domestic materiality has drawn attention to the relationship between portraits and the home, something which has become an important element in the work of Tittler, Cooper, Lena Cowen Orlin and others for whom this relationship is key to understanding portraits' meaning.<sup>31</sup> Thanks to the work of scholars such as Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson there is now a growing acknowledgement of the importance of material culture in historical approaches particularly in relation to the history of the family and the home.<sup>32</sup>

In *Portraits, Painters and Publics in Provincial England*, Tittler reflects his very wide interests in early-modern British political, social, economic, local, urban and cultural histories.<sup>33</sup> Here he describes the development of secular portraiture in the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English provinces, examining the ways in which it provided a barometer of social aspiration which was facilitated by increasing domestic spaces for paintings and an increase in collecting and display. Tittler's contribution to the study of provincial portraiture as a source for the study of regional local history has been helpful in foregrounding the subject in scholarly discourse and normalising the combined use of art historical and textual sources.<sup>34</sup> While he has mainly focussed on individual sitters, he recently contributed an important paper on the portrait of the Kaye family of Yorkshire

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<sup>31</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Gordon, Andrew and Rist, Thomas eds *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, (Surrey, England and Vermont, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010); Tara Hamling, and Catherine Richardson, *Everyday Objects: Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010); Hamling, 'To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household', *Art History*, 30 (2007), pp. 170-97; Hamling, "'An Arelome to This Hous for Ever": Monumental Fixtures and Furnishings in the English Domestic Interior, c.1560-1660,' in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England*, ed. by Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013 ), pp. 59-83.

<sup>33</sup> Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics*.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Tittler, 'Early Stuart Chester as a Centre for Regional Portraiture', 41, pp. 3-21; Robert Tittler, 'Regional Portraiture and the Heraldic Connection in Tudor and Early Stuart England', *The British Art Journal*, 10, pp. 3-10.

which pointed to the significance of this subject and opened the door to expand this kind of study.<sup>35</sup>

As Curatorial Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Tarnya Cooper's work has been extremely influential in re-evaluating post-Reformation English portraiture.<sup>36</sup> This she has done partly through her work as the Principal Investigator on the research project *Making Art in Tudor Britain* which explored the materials, production, influences and patronage of Tudor and Jacobean portraiture and culminated in a co-edited volume covering many aspects of painting practices and patronage in Britain between 1500 and 1630 entitled *Painting in Britain 1500-1630 : Production, Influences and Patronage*.<sup>37</sup> Any attention to group portraits in this publication has also included research on the patronage of portraits of the middling elites in Tudor and Jacobean England, particularly the influence of Protestantism on post-Reformation portraits.<sup>38</sup> Among her main contributions has been her volume *Citizen Portrait* which spans the disciplines of history and art history and argues for the portraits of members of the professional and gentry ranks as being worthy of study by both disciplines.<sup>39</sup> These portraits she argues, offered members of the 'urban elite', a means of self-presentation which required only a small investment of money and time but could proclaim their status and aspirations, simultaneously balancing worldly success with the desire for salvation and the need for

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<sup>35</sup> Tittler, 'Social Aspiration'.

<sup>36</sup> National Gallery Portrait, 'Tarnya Cooper, Curatorial Director', National Portrait Gallery, (2017) [<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/staff-research-profiles/tarnya-cooper.php>, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>37</sup> National Portrait Gallery, 'Making Art in Tudor Britain', 2017, [<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/>, Accessed May 2017]; Tarnya Cooper, Bunstock Aviva, Howard Maurice, and Town Edward, *Painting in Britain 1500-1630 : Production, Influences and Patronage*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Tarnya Cooper, "'Frail Flesh, as in a Glass'": The Portrait as an Immortal Presence in Early Modern England and Wales', in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. by Mary Rogers (Hampshire and Vermont: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 197-212; Cooper, 'Predestined Lives? Portraiture and Religious Belief in England and Wales, 1560-1620', in *Art Re-Formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation in the Visual Arts*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Richard Williams (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 49-65.

<sup>39</sup> Cooper, *Citizen Portrait*.

humility before God. In 2013 Cooper curated a landmark NPG exhibition entitled *Elizabeth I and Her People* which drew attention to the importance of English provincial portraiture and its citizen subjects.<sup>40</sup> This exhibition was accompanied by a lavish catalogue and collection of scholarly essays on related topics such as provincial patronage, social aspiration and identity; all of which challenged the notion of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English provincial portraiture as being either less interesting or accomplished than its continental counterparts.<sup>41</sup>

Like Cooper, Karen Hearn's approach to the subject has been as both a curator and researcher.<sup>42</sup> Her interests in the role of heredity, both of sitters and artists, was reflected in the important Tate exhibition, *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630*. Her editorship and principal authorship of the subsequent catalogue foregrounded the relationship between portraiture and family identity, although at this date her attention was still mainly on the work of continental artists and aristocratic sitters.<sup>43</sup> Importantly, in a period when portraits often defined hereditary status only through portraits of men, Hearn's work on portraits of pregnant sitters, as a way of describing female virtue, turned attention to how women's identity was fashioned within ideals of marriage and progeny.<sup>44</sup>

While building on the work of Hearn, Cooper, Tittler and others, this thesis addresses gaps in the historiography outlined above, especially by focussing on the early-

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<sup>40</sup> Curated with Jane Eade.

<sup>41</sup> Tarnya Cooper with Jane Eade, *Elizabeth I and Her People*, (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2013).

<sup>42</sup> Dr Hearn currently holds the post of Honorary Professor at University College London, she was formerly curator of sixteenth and seventeenth century British Art at Tate: [<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/eme/people/hearn>, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>43</sup> Karen Hearn, (ed.), *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630* (London: Tate Publishing 1995).

<sup>44</sup> Karen Hearn, "'Saved through Childbearing': A Godly Context for Elizabethan Pregnancy Portraits", in *Art Re-Formed Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 65-68; Hearn, 'A Fatal Fertility? Elizabethan and Jacobean Pregnancy Portraits', *Costume*, 34 (2000), pp. 39-43.

modern family and its depiction in portraits. Group portraits, it will be demonstrated, were key elements in family self-fashioning, whose study, as Heal and Holmes identified as long ago as 1994 is a subject "... sorely in need of more serious research ..."<sup>45</sup>

#### **d. Limitations and challenges**

Both the pictorial and textual sources which form the bedrock of this thesis share many of the same limitations. These include partial survival, subjectivity (of both the viewer/reader and the maker) and reliance on interpreting lost languages, written and visual, and additionally, both sources are restricted to a relatively narrow and comparatively wealthy social group. Works of art as historical sources may have the additional problem of being the product of aesthetic considerations and practices which are lost.<sup>46</sup> However, Tittler counters this last problem, noting that the traditionally 'inferior' aesthetic of provincial portraiture provides fresh new subjects for study, free of the traditional judgements of conventional art historians and connoisseurs; they are, he contends 'a legitimate part of the history both of English portraiture and of English society itself.'<sup>47</sup>

The portraits which are the subject of this thesis come from a range of places and locating them has been a challenging and exciting project which would probably not have been possible without the increasing availability of digital collections.<sup>48</sup> However digital resources were rarely sufficient, and it proved vital to visit many private and publicly-owned houses, churches and galleries to study the portraits at first hand. In addition to field

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<sup>45</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> Robert I Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb (eds), *Art and History: Images and Their Meaning, Studies in Interdisciplinary History* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics* p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Such as Bridgeman Education, Art UK, the National Trust's archive and the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art at Yale. Art UK is the successor to Your Paintings: [<http://artuk.org/>]; [<http://www.bridgemaneducation.com>]; [<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/>] ; [<http://britishart.yale.edu/>]; Most galleries, auction houses and museums have now digitized their collections, including the national collections in London.

visits, picture archives were also consulted for context and provenance as were county record offices, which together with the Institute for Historical Research offered textual sources for family history.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless there was still limited access to some portraits, especially to those in private collections where, despite the considerable generosity of owners, copies were sometimes restricted to black and white versions or to poor reproductions. On occasions, early twentieth-century sale catalogues were useful sources of evidence for lost or poorly reproduced portraits since they often contain hand-written notes about content and composition. Despite these limitations this thesis has presented the opportunity to bring these portraits together as a coherent group for the first time, demonstrating the development and artistic abilities of their mostly unnamed English artists and the taste, priorities and ambitions of their patrons.

#### **e. Structure**

The thesis consists of five chapters; the chapters in the main body of the thesis use two or three detailed case studies to develop their own area of focus which builds towards the central argument. Chapter One establishes the artistic and cultural context by exploring the distinctive pictorial language of the portraits and some of their uses, including as gifts. This is followed by an examination of the commissioning and collecting practices of the gentry which relies on the fortuitous survival of a portrait inventory and a collection of letters. Chapter Two focusses on depictions of the nuclear family, pointing to the pressures and constraints placed on family members to conform to the ideals which were prescribed both by the church and wider society. This chapter pays particular attention to the ways in which portraits reflect the social priorities of gentry families such as patriarchy, the centrality of marriage and family unity. It speculates about the reasons for the large

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<sup>49</sup> Especially important were the Heinz Archive at the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) and the Witt Library at the Courtauld Institute.

numbers of portraits which depict wives alone with children and the comparative paucity of corresponding portraits of fathers with sons. Chapter Three then looks beyond the nuclear family to images of step-families and kin and examines some under-investigated portraits of grandparents with their grandchildren; an important subject with much scope for further research.

Chapter Four turns to the subject of status, a matter of profound importance to the socially aspirant gentry families who used their portraits to mimic families in the ranks above them and distinguish themselves from those below. This chapter is divided into two sections; in the period before about 1640, where, it is argued, high status was mainly represented by the presence of heraldry on the portrait surface, signifying long lineage. After the middle decades of the seventeenth century heraldry gradually disappeared from portraits to be replaced by a more relaxed and expressive mode which emphasises refinement in manners, demeanour and life-style.

The next two chapters, numbers Five and Six, are somewhat related. Chapter Five examines family piety, a subject of great concern in the decades after the Reformation and one which governed most aspects of family life, affecting relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children and daily household life. This chapter draws attention to the distinct visual vocabulary adopted by families on either side of the confessional divide, particularly those catholic families who used portraits with political intent to protest their treatment. This group of portraits is contrasted with a Presbyterian family who used their portrait to conflate their social, religious and commercial identities. Textual sources reveal a more nuanced view of religious division than the portraits, showing that even where families were depicted as polarised along religious lines there was often toleration of difference. A particularly important element in some of this group of portraits

is the foregrounding of maternal faith, something which draws attention to the place of wives and mothers in the inheritance of belief. This theme is developed further in Chapter Six which takes as its subject 'Death and Memorialisation' and focusses first on two portraits of dead or dying wives to draw attention to the ways in which their deathbeds were used to idealise their memories; these are the portrait of *Sir Thomas Aston and the Deathbed of his Wife* and *The Saltonstall Family*. Both these portraits, unlike most of the works discussed in this thesis are relatively well known, being displayed in nationally important galleries. The Saltonstall portrait in particular, is an enigmatic work which has resisted attempts to pin down the identity of its sitters, the meaning of its composition or iconographic details. Here, a new interpretation is offered based on its recent re-dating to 1641 and what can be determined about the particular circumstances that prompted its creation. The third case study in this chapter is a discussion of the sad but common deaths of children within the family and focusses on one unusual memorial portrait to a dead child of the Streatfeild family. The memorialisation of children in sculpted monuments is relatively common; this study considers why this is not the case in portraits and discusses the possible relationship between this melancholy work and the lost Royalist cause at the time.

Ideas about what constitutes 'a family' change constantly through time and across geographic boundaries and are subjective, affected by sentiment. However historical and art-historical studies like this one can bring a degree of objectivity which puts the subject into perspective. The ways in which families record and store their images are peculiar to them, having emotional resonances of their own, while at the same time making important statements and having relevance for wider society. It is these concerns, both public and private, to which this thesis speaks.



## CHAPTER 1

### PATRONS, PROCESSES AND PLACES

This chapter considers some of the important artistic and cultural factors which underpinned the processes and contexts in which gentry families commissioned and viewed their portraits. It begins with material and stylistic considerations, moves to examine some of the uses to which portraits were put and finally turns to questions relating to the gentry as patrons, exploring the significant relationship between portraits and gentry houses. The relationship between gentry families, their land and their houses was of great importance, jointly signifying inheritance, wealth, status, permanence and entitlement to power. Portraits were key elements in constructing identity, linking ancestors to present and future generations, their country house and its ownership.<sup>1</sup>

While not the principal concern of this thesis, material and stylistic considerations nonetheless frame the chapters which follow, playing an important role in the ways artists and patrons adapted the language of paint to reflect their social and ideological concerns. The first part of this chapter takes a chronological approach to the one hundred and thirty-year time span of the thesis, charting in very broad terms some major technical and stylistic changes. It then moves to examine some of the uses to which portraits were put, including for displaying wealth and as gifts. This chapter concludes with an examination of some important questions relating to provincial patronage, particularly highlighting the role of the gentry house in the display and reception of portraits. Each of the subsequent chapters, while taking a thematic approach to the portraits, link back to this chapter, demonstrating how changes in the painterly vocabulary navigated the changeable values of

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<sup>1</sup> For a later period see: Gillian Perry, Kate Retford, Jordan Vibert, and Hannah Lyons, *Placing Faces : The Portrait and the English Country House in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

gentility, the demands of their new religious ideas and the mutable role of the family in early modern society.

## **Material and stylistic considerations**

### **a. c. 1550-1600**

In the second half of the sixteenth century portraits were mainly painted on board, which by around 1620 had been replaced by canvas as the main support thereby avoiding the risk of the wood splitting, allowing for the production of larger, full-length and more portable work and had the added advantage of imitating the work of court artists who had begun to use canvas by an earlier date.<sup>2</sup> Scale thereafter became an important expression of status, so that large sized family group portraits became a new way of demonstrating dominance.<sup>3</sup> Portraits of this early date were characterised by a narrow colour palette of yellows, browns, red ochre and black carbon, the portrait of Lady Anne Aldersley and her children of 1550-75 is an example (Fig.1:1).<sup>4</sup> Libby Sheldon's in-depth analysis of the use of pigments in Tudor and Jacobean painting shows how artists chose pigments carefully, balancing their choice of colour, its symbolic status and value, against practical considerations such as handling and permanence.<sup>5</sup> Such considerations are discussed in

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<sup>2</sup> See: Study of one hundred and eighty four oak panels from the NPG collection, ranging in date from the early sixteenth to eighteenth centuries with most dating from late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries: Ian Tyers, 'Panel Making: Sources of Wood, Construction, 'Trademarks' and Conclusions on Their Production and Trade in Britain', in *Painting in Britain 1500-1630: Production, Influences and Patronage*, ed. by Aviva Burnstock Tarnya Cooper, Maurice Howard and Edward Town (Oxford: For The British Academy by Oxford University Press 2015), pp. 107-109; canvas became a support for royal portraits from the late sixteenth century, for example Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth, 'Ditchley Portrait'*, c. 1592, oil on canvas, NPG 2561.

Tarnya Cooper with Jane Eade, *Elizabeth I and her people*, (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2013), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Hearn, *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630* (London: Tate Publishing 1995), p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> The limited palette was not due to shortage of materials, since it appears that pigments, binders and supports were all available in the provinces as readily as in London Tate, 'Tudor and Stuart Technical Research', (May 2003) [<http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/tudor-and-stuart-technical-research>, Accessed May 18 2017];

<sup>5</sup> Libby Sheldon, *Palette, Practice and Purpose*, 'Pigments and Their Employment by Native and Anglo-Netherlandish Artists in Tudor and Jacobean Painting', in *Painting In Britain 1500-1630*, ed. by Aviva

Chapter Four in relation to the portrait of Edward Pytts and his grandson (Fig.3:4) where the choice of an expensive pigment, it is argued, reflects a recognition of the value of the boy.



Figure 1:1 English School, *Lady Anne Aldersley and her Children*, 1550-75, oil on panel, location unknown, copyright Weiss Gallery

Before about 1600 provincial portraits were also distinguished by a limited range of props consisting mainly of books, scrolls, pens, *memento mori* symbols, swords and badges of office for adults, and occasionally fruit or toys for children.<sup>6</sup> They were also commonly distinguished by the presence of inscriptions and/or heraldry. The Aldersley portrait, for example, contains two coats of arms and text indicating the ages of the sitters and the initials 'I.W', perhaps the artist's. This portrait is also typical of the posture and

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Burnstock Tarnya Cooper, Maurice Howard and Edward Town (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 128-36.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter Seven, 'The Provincial Vocabulary: 'Props' and Their Meaning, pp. 125-151.

gestures of the figures at this date, which are mainly stiff and formal with little interaction or exchange of gaze between family members and their faces are generally expressionless, conveying little trace of playfulness or humour. However, here as elsewhere, touch and gesture suggest the conventional family virtues of unity and solidarity, the linked arms of the two brothers, and their mother's hand on the older boy's shoulder for example reinforce the idea that collective support should be offered to the heir. At this date, figures are often clumsily modelled with little perspective or shading to define the body, although careful attention is given to the details of costume which define both wealth and conventional gender roles.

Another example of this early style is the portrait of the Bartholomew family of *c.* 1600 where the short brush strokes, narrow and sombre palette, rigid postures and gestures convey a sense of stalwart character and moral rectitude to describe a family which is distinguished by values such as order, piety and unity (Fig. 1:2). This portrait shares compositional elements with many sculpted monuments in churches, such as the children ranked formally in order of age and height resembling mourning figures. At this date individual identity is depicted more through props and gesture than naturalistically and the portraits suggest little of familial intimacy, spontaneity or informality.



Figure 1:2 English School, *Group Portrait of a Family*, traditionally identified as the Bartholomews of Burford, Oxfordshire, c. 1600, oil on panel, unknown location

Many provincial artists from the early period were trained in heraldic schools where there were close links between the regional gentry and county heralds, although as Robert Tittler points out, the presence of text and heraldic imagery in the early portraits was due more to social context than any other factor.<sup>7</sup> As the demands of patrons and the skill of artists changed towards the end of the Elizabethan period, heraldic schools declined in importance and the limited colour palette and formal compositional elements gradually gave way to a wider range of colours and more refined techniques including the use of perspective and better understanding of the body.

It is unusual to find sources for this transition, but a fascinating account of the studio practices of an heraldic painter, as he adapted to the new styles, is to be found in the

<sup>7</sup> Robert Tittler, 'Regional Portraiture and the Heraldic Connection in Tudor and Early Stuart England', *The British Art Journal*, 10 (2009), pp. 3-10; Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 6, 'Heraldry and Portraiture', pp. 102-124.

notebook of John Guillim written between the mid 1570s and 1598.<sup>8</sup> The extraordinarily detailed account of the processes of preparing paint and boards is interesting for the range of pigments and materials employed. However what is most relevant for the development of English provincial portraiture are passages devoted to the production of subtle colours to express as naturalistically as possible, the hues and tonal values of the face, lips, hair and eyes. For Guillim, humoral characteristics were reflected in facial colour and he recommends different compounds for each humor. For a ‘sanguine complexioned face’ for instance, his ‘recipe’ consists of ‘Vermilion. Lake. & Whyte lead’ in different tonal mixes.<sup>9</sup> ‘For shadow of the face. [he recommends] Browne ochre. Lamp black. Spanish red. & Umbra’<sup>10</sup>. The different complexions, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic, receive different proportions of pigment as does hair colour and shadowing. What this notebook represents is the transitional moment when an artist trained and practised in the heraldic tradition is moving to a newer mode in which he attempts more life-like representations of faces in response to technical advances and the changing market.

### **b. c.1600 – c.1635**

This more naturalistic rendering of the figures first appears in the portraits of families with strong connections to London, for example the portrait of an unknown lady and her two children of 1624 (Fig. 1:3).<sup>11</sup> This portrait depicts its subjects in the beautifully

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<sup>8</sup> Jim Murrell, ‘John Guillim's Book: A Heraldic Painter's “Vade Mecum”’, *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, 57 (1993), p. 1; Thomas Woodcock, ‘Guillim, John (1550–1621)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11725>, accessed 18 April 2017]

<sup>9</sup> Murrell, ‘John Guillim's Book’. pp. 19-21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> This may be a portrait of Mrs William Murray and her two daughters Elizabeth and Margaret. Thanks to the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art for access to their archives. William Murray was appointed whipping boy to the young Charles I and become his companion and groom to the bedchamber see R. Malcolm Smuts, ‘Murray, William, first earl of Dysart (d. 1655)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19653>, accessed 18 April 2017]; the portrait of Edward Pytts and his grandson (Fig.3:5) is another example of a family with access to London.

rendered costumes of the court, suggesting exposure to the many continental, particularly Netherlandish, or Anglo-Netherlandish artists working there such as Robert Peake and William Larkin.<sup>12</sup> It seems that by the 1590s many native artists had absorbed the more naturalistic stylistic and technical techniques which distinguished the work of the Anglo-Netherlandish artists.<sup>13</sup> These techniques, which continued to pay close attention to costume and jewellery details, were augmented by the availability of good quality materials to produce portraits with life-like flesh tones and modelling of the body.<sup>14</sup>

Among the next generation of artists employed in the circles around the court of James I, perhaps the most prominent was Marcus Gheeraerts (II) (died 1636) who broke away from the flat, linear depictions of native artists, becoming well-known for his exquisite depictions of costume and lace. Karen Hearn describes his work as being ‘characterised by a soft, brushy treatment of the flesh areas and a questing, sympathetic approach to the subject’s facial features.’<sup>15</sup> Gheeraerts was extraordinarily popular and many works attributed to him may be copies or even executed by his father Marcus Gheeraerts (I).<sup>16</sup> Hearn attributes a number of innovations to the younger man, including the reintroduction to England of the family group portrait, more common in continental Europe.<sup>17</sup> The changes which Gheeraerts brought probably influenced artists working with provincial patrons, including perhaps the Burdetts (Case study 2, Chapter Two) and the Pytts (Case

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<sup>12</sup> See: Caroline Rae, ‘Marcus Gheeraerts, John De Critz, Robert Peake and William Larkin’, in *Painting in Britain 1500-1630*, ed. by Aviva Bunstock, Tarnya Cooper, Maurice Howard, and Edward Town (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2015), p. 178.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Karen Hearn, *Marcus Gheeraerts II: Elizabethan Art in Focus* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Among examples are: Marcus Gheeraerts II, *Anne Lady Pope with her Children*, 1596, oil on canvas, private collection and Marcus Gheeraerts II, *Barbara Gamage with Six Children*, c. 1590, oil on canvas, private collection.

study 1, Chapter Three), where more naturalistic modelling of the figures and faces combines with delicate costume detailing.



Figure 1:3 Unknown artist, *Unknown Lady with Two Children*, 1624, oil on panel, Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection USA

Another artist who introduced naturalistic Netherlandish painterly styles to the English repertoire was Cornelius Johnson (1598-1661), possibly the pupil of Gheeraerts.<sup>18</sup> Johnson also became particularly popular with provincial patrons; his earliest portraits, dating from around 1619 are of individual sitters, whose costumes, lace and jewellery were depicted in meticulous detail, the modelling of the figures often mimicking the naturalistic styles of his contemporaries Daniel Mytens and Van Dyck.<sup>19</sup> Later in his career Johnson painted a number of well-known family groups, notably the Capel Family of 1640, which

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<sup>18</sup> Els Vermandere. "Gheeraerts." *Grove Art Online*. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press, [http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T031861pg2 accessed 26 July 2016].

<sup>19</sup> Karen Hearn, *Cornelius Johnson* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015).



is an example of his mature style (Fig.1:4) The desire of provincial families to own portraits by Johnson and Gheeraerts is evidenced by the numbers attributed to them and the many copies made of their work.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 1:4 Cornelius Johnson, *The Capel Family*, 1640, oil on canvas, NPG, London

Gheeraerts, Johnson and their contemporaries were either based in London or were semi itinerant in the provinces, becoming extremely fashionable and sensitive to changes in the ways in which patrons wished to be seen and they gradually developed painterly vocabularies in which the body became a site for displays of refinement and elegance. Props suggesting education and appropriate elite skills, such as hunting, replaced the earlier, static and formal depictions of parents and children. Good examples of these changes can be seen in the portraits of the Lucy and Ottley families painted between about 1628 and 1636 respectively (Figs 2:15 and 1:5).

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<sup>20</sup> For example: British School, *Sir John Done (1577–1629)* (after the circle of Gheeraerts), oil on canvas,; Marcus Gheeraerts the younger (circle of), *Dorothy, Lady Done, née Wilbraham (d.1636)*, oil on wood, Grosvenor Museum, Chester.



Figure 1:5 Petrus Troueil, *Sir Francis Ottley and Family*, 1636, oil on canvas, Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery

### c. c.1635 - c. 1680

By about 1640 the taste of provincial patrons had changed again and by the late seventeenth century many provincial artists reflected the styles of fashionable court artists such as Van Dyck.<sup>21</sup> After this date, portraits were distinguished by even greater skill in describing the body naturalistically and costume was enlivened with swathes of flowing textiles in gorgeous colour while gestures were used to convey a sense of movement and dynamic character. Perhaps more than ever portraits convey an impression of these elite families as a special breed whose positive sense of themselves is shared by the group. The choice of objects associated with both adults and children expanded and children were depicted with a widening range, including animals, flowers, fruit and toys and their poses occasionally suggested playfulness. These changes reflected expanding access to the work of Dutch and Flemish artists from whom prosperous merchant families commissioned

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Brown, Hans Vlieghe, with Contributions from Fran Baudouin ... [et.al] *Van Dyck 1599-1641*, (London : Antwerp: Royal Academy of Arts ; Antwerpen Open, 1999).

numerous portraits of their families. They also demonstrate a new kind of assured confidence in posture and pose assumed by elite groups which is discussed in Chapter Two. Examples are the portraits of the Sykes of Westella family of 1664 (Fig. 1:6) and the family of Robert Vyner (Fig. 1:7) which share many common elements with Dutch family portraits of the same date such as gorgeous fabrics and self-assured poses.<sup>22</sup>

These families engage the viewer with a direct, collective gaze which expresses confidence in their taste and wealth. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, gaze, hand gestures and posture are crucial elements in conveying the status and refinement of these families and confirm their gendered and hierarchical relationships. The dramatically lit classical landscapes in which the families apparently take their ease suggest the existence of a large and prosperous estate which links them closely to the land which underpinned their political and economic power and which they apparently have the leisure to enjoy.



Figure 1: 6 Nicholas Maes, *The family of the Sykes of Westella*, 1664, oil on canvas, location unknown

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<sup>22</sup> For example Adam Camaraius *Five children and their pet antelope* (1650).



Figure 1:7 John Michael Wright, *The Family of Sir Robert Vyner*, 1673, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London

## The uses of portraits

### i. Displaying wealth

Portraits had the great advantage of being generally cheaper than clothes, silver, plate or sculpted tomb monuments, while having the same functions of elevating their patrons' status and displaying their wealth.<sup>23</sup> They had other material uses too and the production and circulation of portraits played an important part in what Linda Levy Peck terms the 'Consuming Splendor' of seventeenth-century England. They became commodities to be traded and exchanged, taking their place alongside books, globes, exotic objects and maps in the collections of the elite.<sup>24</sup> The common practice of copying was part of this process, satisfying the demands of the market for large numbers of portraits.

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<sup>23</sup> Cooper and Eade, *Elizabeth I and her people*, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor : Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) pp. 162-187. Tittler, *Portraits, Painters and Publics*, p. 32.



The astonishing numbers and range of objects displayed in gentry households is demonstrated in an inventory of the Cholmondeley family of Cheshire.<sup>25</sup> In 1681 their household goods were valued at more than £711. Objects in the ‘Great Parlour’ in Cholmondeley Hall alone included ‘turkey work’ carpets and curtains, several inlaid mirrors, dozens of fine tables, chairs, clocks and cabinets, ‘The Great Map of England’, a ‘New Map of Hungary’ and dozens of portraits; the contents of this room alone was valued at £36 10s.<sup>26</sup> Portraits had a particular advantage in the competitive material culture of the time, because they could display fashionable taste through the depiction of expensive, imported fabrics and luxury goods as well as being portable and tradable objects in themselves. The representation of imported rugs, feathers or fabrics demonstrated engagement in metropolitan, continental and oriental markets, and for families such as the Saltonstalls, the display of exotic luxury fabrics in their portrait was a vivid reminder that their enormous wealth was founded on trade with continental and oriental markets.<sup>27</sup>

## **ii. Gifts and copies**

Portraits were common gifts whose symbolic meanings might have been political, for example to cement alliances and oil the wheels of commerce, or when exchanged between friends and family members could demonstrate loyalty and set up relationships of mutual obligation between giver and receiver.<sup>28</sup> They might also act as affordable visual reminders of the permanency of family bonds or simply provide tokens of affection and

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<sup>25</sup> Cholmondeley Hall Inventory, 1681, CRO/DCH/K/6/2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ian W. Archer, ‘Saltonstall, Sir Richard (1521?–1601)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24580>, accessed 18 April 2017]; See: Edward Chaney (ed.) *The Evolution of English Collecting : The Reception of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 61; Richard Williams, ‘Collecting and Religion in Late Sixteenth-Century England’, in Chaney, *The Evolution of English Collecting*, p.159.

<sup>28</sup> For discussion of portraits as gifts see: Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts : Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp.164-167.

remembrance, keeping the memory of a deceased family member alive. Portraits given as gifts were often freighted with emotion; for example in a letter accompanying a miniature portrait of herself sent as a gift to her mother, Lady Anne Clifford wrote: “I have sent you ... my picture done in Little, which some say is very like me, and others say it doth me rather wrong than flatter me. I know you will accept the shadow of her whose substance is come from yourself;”.<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Chew notes that Anne Clifford was a prodigious commissioner of copies which were intended to ensure that her image was widely distributed between her various houses and amongst her peers, household and relations to cement relationships and alliances by keeping her face permanently in their minds, even acting as a form of control.<sup>30</sup>

While it was one thing for the aristocratic Anne Clifford to send a miniature portrait of herself as a token of affection, it was quite another for less wealthy families to send copies of the large-scale portraits which are the subject of this study. Even so gentry portraits were copied, strengthening bonds between families in just the same way as portraits were used for dynastic and diplomatic purposes by royal and aristocratic sitters.<sup>31</sup> The rare inventory of paintings from Utkinton Hall, Cheshire indicates that the Crewe

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted in: Elizabeth V. Chew, “‘Your Honor's Desyres’: Lady Anne Clifford and the World of Goods”, in *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage and Gender in 17th Century Britain*. *Yorkshire Archaeological Society Occasional Paper No. 7*, ed. Karen Hearn and Lynn Hulse (Leeds, Yorkshire: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009), p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 25-42.

<sup>31</sup> Tracey A. Sowerby, ‘A Memorial and a Pledge of Faith’: Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture’, *The English Historical Review*, 129 (2014), pp. 296-331; a rather crude copy was made of the portrait of the family of Sir Thomas Lucy more than a hundred years after the original. The ‘original may itself be a copy of an earlier, destroyed portrait: Walker Art Gallery, *Sir Thomas Lucy and His Family*, Cornelius Johnson (1593–1661) (after) [<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/sir-thomas-lucy-and-his-family-98743>, Accessed May 2017]; National Portrait Gallery ‘Sir Thomas More, His Father, His Household and His Descendants’, (2017), [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01734/Sir-Thomas-More-his-father-his-household-and-his-descendants?search=ap&subj=234%3BBooks+and+libraries&rNo=5>, Accessed May 2017]; Levy Peck, *Consuming Spondor*, p.162.

family displayed many copied portraits.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes this was because they could not afford the best artists, as was probably the case with ‘The King’s picture’ and ‘The Queen’s picture copied by Lupo from Van Dyck’.<sup>33</sup> These affordable copies had much the same effect of demonstrating loyalty to the crown, expressing political affiliation and demonstrating fashionable style, as if they were really by Van Dyck. The artist whose accounts appear in the inventory, notes that he made a copy ‘after the moulds’ and more ambitiously a ‘copy after Titian’, the former cost John Crewe £1 and the latter £5.<sup>34</sup>

It was common for families to purchase copies in series which were often of members of the royal family or exemplary political or religious figures framed as a set.<sup>35</sup> At Utkinton Hall the Crewe family for example displayed series of ‘Eight Earls of Chester’ and ‘Eight barons of Cheshire’ as a way of embedding themselves alongside their county elite.<sup>36</sup> This practice draws attention to the importance of the contexts in which family portraits were viewed, where sometimes it was desirable that a whole scheme could be seen at the same time, reinforcing the religious, political and ideological status of the family, cementing alliances across families of equal rank and even making a visual link to more elevated families. The Utkinton inventory also lists a portrait of ‘Ld Keeper Coventry’ by ‘Johnson’ [Cornelius] which is described as ‘copy’.<sup>37</sup> This appears to be one of very many versions of portraits of Thomas Coventry, 1st Baron Coventry (1578-1640), Lord Keeper of whom there are eleven paintings or engravings in the NPG, of which only

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<sup>32</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/20, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644. Thanks to Professor Cust for drawing attention to this important inventory.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/23, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644; ‘After the moulds’ probably refers to a drawing taken from a relief sculpture.

<sup>35</sup> See collection of series of exemplary protestant figures at Knole, Kent: [<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/results?Collections=59105162fffffe073cfcf565eeca363f&Sort=collection&Page=2> Accessed July 2016]

<sup>36</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/22, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>37</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/20, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

one is described as actually by Cornelius Johnson, while another is an oil painting ‘after’ Johnson.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the NPG copies, there are others of the same subject at Longleat House, home of the aristocratic Cobham family, and another at Charlecote Park, home of the Lucy family.<sup>39</sup> The presence of copies of portraits of the same subject in various gentry homes was a way of re-enforcing political and social networks and a visible sign of shared status and political interests, even claiming some of the qualities of the sitter.

Copies of portraits of eminent or founding family members were favoured by the Crewe family, particularly popular was Randolph (or Randall) Crewe, the father of John, a man who rose from relatively humble origins in Nantwich, Cheshire to acquire great wealth, serving as Speaker of the House of Commons in 1614 and chief justice of king's bench, between 1625 and 6.<sup>40</sup> Sir Randolph's portrait, described as ‘my father's picture in his Robes’ was the first listed in the Utkinton inventory and another version of the same subject appears in the accounts in the same inventory as: ‘Your fathers picture in black and white’ valued £1 10s.<sup>41</sup> A large number of other versions of Sir Randolph's portrait are extant, including one in the House of Commons Collection, another by Lely of 1645 and an etching by Hollar as well as other copies.<sup>42</sup>

### **iii. Heirlooms**

Susan Foister has stressed the problems of identifying portraits from Tudor wills, where the complex terminology often conceals them as ‘pictures’, ‘images’ or ‘tables’

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<sup>38</sup> Cornelius Johnson, Thomas Coventry, 1st Baron Coventry, (1639), oil on canvas, NPG 4815.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Cust, ‘Coventry, Thomas, first Baron Coventry (1578–1640)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6483>, accessed 18 April 2017]

<sup>40</sup> Wilfrid Prest, ‘Crewe, Sir Randolph (*bap.* 1559, *d.* 1646)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6685>, accessed 18 April 2017].

<sup>41</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/20, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644; CRO, 63/2/694/23, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>42</sup> *Unknown artist*, Sir Randolph Crewe, oil on canvas, Parliamentary Art Collection; Peter Lely *Randolph Crewe*, oil on canvas, c.1645, Christ's College, Cambridge.



however, family portraits were popular heirlooms, if rarely itemised in wills, but the frequency with which they were inherited usually has to be inferred from their continued existence in the same family.<sup>43</sup> Many portraits of family groups still remain in the same family, often displayed in the same house after many generations, creating an illusion of unbroken ancestry. These include the Newdigates of Arbury Hall, the Brudenells of Deene Park, the Lucys of Charlecote Park and the Harts of Lullingstone Castle and others. Sometimes, as was the case with the Tradescants, the family archive was taken into a public collection at an early date ensuring the survival of at least fourteen of their portraits, including of couples, children and family groups.<sup>44</sup>

#### **e. Patronage and the Gentry**

It is rare to find evidence for the process of artistic patronage among the gentry in provincial England but the fortunate survival of the Utkinton inventory and a series of letters between Sir Walter Bagot and the artist John Michael Wright casts light not only on the practices of patronage but also the relationship between patrons and their artists. The Bagot letters show that the composition and size of the work was mainly dictated by the patron while the price was negotiated between patron and artist. As the letters show, the frames, their gilding, quality and elaboration was evidently made elsewhere, charged separately and priced individually.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Susan Foister, 'Paintings and Other Works of Art in Sixteenth-Century English Inventories', *The Burlington Magazine*, 123 (1981), pp. 274-5. The will of Lady Dorothy Shirley unusually, contains references to the portrait of her late husband Sir Henry Unton, TNA, PROB/11/167/311, Will of Lady Dorothy Shirley, 1635; Tittler, *Portraits, Painters and Publics*, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Tradescant Collection [<http://www.ashmolean.org/ash/amulets/tradescant/tradescant07.html>, accessed January 2017].

<sup>45</sup> Tarnya Cooper, 'Elizabethan Portraiture: Taste, Style and Patronage', in *Elizabeth I and Her People*, ed. by Tarnya Cooper with Jane Eade, (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2013), pp. 11-19.

### **i. The Bachymbyd letters**

The Bachymbyd letters consists of seven letters, two bills and a receipt which comprise the correspondence of 1675 to 1677 between Wright and Sir Walter concerning a commission agreed on December 9th 1675. This correspondence demonstrates in considerable detail the process of commissioning portraits, their preparation, cost and materials, the arrangements for packing and transporting the finished portraits and the delicate, unbalanced relationship which developed between the artist and his patron.

The commission consisted of six portraits of Sir Walter's close family, together with two landscapes, all destined for the family home, Blithfield Hall near Rugeley, Staffordshire.<sup>46</sup> An advance of half the total cost of £140 was paid, and the work was itemised as follows:

... Sir Walter Bagot's picture to the knee, sitting ... another of Sir Walter standing with a dog ... his lady's picture to the knee sitting ... the Lady Bagot's [sic] his mother and child ... Mrs Salisbury and the two children ... for a head picture of Mr Salisbury .<sup>47</sup>

The portraits of Lady Bagot and her granddaughter and Mrs Salesbury with the two children are considered in Chapter Three (Figs 3:6 and 3:8). The commission was completed a year after the original contract, although Wright complained that his estimate of £140 was less than the work cost him to make because he had originally offered them at

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<sup>46</sup> Michael Wright took the additional fore-name 'John' in the 1650s, probably to signal his commitment to Roman Catholicism, although continuing to sign himself 'Michael Wright' at least until the 1670s see: Duncan Thomson, 'Wright, John Michael (*bap.* 1617, *d.* 1694)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30040>, accessed 18 April 2017]; The letters are part of the *Calendar of Salusbury Correspondence 1553 – c. 1700*, held by The National Library of Wales. The *Calendar* contains seven letters from "Mich. Wright" to "Sir W. Bagot" from 1676, known as the 'Bachymbyd Letters', Nos 299, 303, 304, 312, 313, 316 & 329. Thanks to Martin Robson Riley, Senior Enquiries Assistant NLW for his help in locating and supplying digital copies of these letters, a helpful commentary on these letters is in: William James Smith, 'Letters from Michael Wright', *The Burlington Magazine*, 95 (1953), 233-36.

<sup>47</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 329a. Also spelled 'Salusbury' and 'Salisbury'.

a discount.<sup>48</sup> In attempting to claim the full price for the portraits, he argued that he had undertaken the work himself, not leaving it to his assistants, pleading:

... I reserve[d] them to be done by my own hands, and therefore have taken the more time: though to deal in generously I find my bargain very heavy upon me, yet I will stand to it as it is a thing sacred and, leave the rest to your generosity whom I know to be a person of honour and judgement ...<sup>49</sup>

He continued his complaints about money:

I shall be an absolute looser of that ten or twelve pounds, for, I reckon I have made your pieces (considering the fullness and quality of work) cheaper by a third part than I was able to afford them or could do now were I to make them over again. I value every one of the children's pictures equal to any of your or your Lady's and really think they took me up more by me. To conclude noble sire, I refer my self entirely to your generosity and prudence, and though my prices now for half length are £25 and £30 a piece ever since Christmas and that yours be perhaps more laborious than any I now make ...<sup>50</sup>

All the portraits were nearing completion by July 1676 and Wright notes in a letter to Sir Walter: 'Your pictures are in a great forwardness three are done (besides the head of Mr Salisbury) the fourth is in hand', which left only the portrait of his mother-in-law with the children to be finished.<sup>51</sup> Wright notes in his bill: 'For the Lady Bagot's his mother and child £30', this was ten pounds less than the more complicated portrait of Mrs Salesbury and the two children.<sup>52</sup>

The frames for all the portraits were made separately by carvers and gilders and Wright argued that he had taken extra care to choose the frames which involved extra work and expense and he wrote:

Your frames are all in hand, that of my Lady your mother is already come home, they are richer than the first pattern I showed you which you liked, but my Lady Wilbraham coming hither caused hers to be made broader and Richer in breadth of the wood and gilding which occasioned that I did the like to all yours that they might not be inferior to any in that county, so I sold the frame you saw, to another

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<sup>49</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 299 (July 1676).

<sup>50</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 303 and 303b (October 9<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>51</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 299 v (July 27<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>52</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 329a pt 2 (March 19<sup>th</sup> 1676/7).

person. All things shall be ready god willing by the latter end of August or thereabouts of which you shall have timely notice as to the remitting of money when I am towards and end of the last piece<sup>53</sup>

The frames and cases formed a significant part of the cost of the portraits, two types of gold were used, the most expensive was reserved for the three half-length portraits while those for the portraits of the grandmothers and children, were ‘rich carved gilded frames in burnished gold’.<sup>54</sup> The price for Lady Bagot and Mary’s frame was £5, one pound cheaper than the larger portrait of Mrs Salesbury and the children.<sup>55</sup> For the less prestigious oval portrait of Sir Edward’s father-in-law Charles Salesbury, the frame was in ‘oyle gold’ and cost only £1.<sup>56</sup>

For the largest portrait, of Mrs Salesbury and the children (Fig. 3:8), Wright re-used an old, rubbed down canvas, presumably to save money, but he still spent much time and care on this portrait, the most ambitious of the six.<sup>57</sup> On October 24<sup>th</sup> 1676 he complained to his patron:

I have now done my part, and do solemnly protest before God, I have been just to a ? [indecipherable] for you having spared neither for time, rich colours or study, as may be seen (without vanity) by the goodness and quality of work and labour in them all. Madam Salisbury’s pieces (being of three figures) I thought would never have an end for I could not hinder my self from making it curious and full of variety as the subject required, and to say truth it hath been extraordinary taking here.<sup>58</sup>

A new argument was then used by Wright for increasing the cost of the portraits, which was his preference for the expensive ultramarine and red lake and he claimed an extra £3 10s for these ‘rich colours’.<sup>59</sup> Persisting:

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<sup>53</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 299 v (July 27<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>54</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 329 a pt 2 (March 19<sup>th</sup> 1676/7).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Presumably gold oil paint.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Bustin, ‘John Michael Wright (1617-1794) Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren, Edward and Elizabeth Bagot 1676’, in *Paint and Purpose : A Study of Technique in British Art* ed. by Rica Jones Stephen Hackney, and Joyce Townsend, (London: Tate Gallery, 1999), p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters 304 (October 24<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>59</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 316c (January 1676).

[I] wonder you should except [object] against so disproportionable a sum on my side as £3 - £10 for extraordinary colours which in customary everyone pays as Mr Lilly and all other artists can inform you, for, I could have saved that charge and given you colours which would have seemed as rich at the present but would not have lasted as these will.<sup>60</sup>

Ultramarine was indeed a very expensive pigment and as Mary Bustin has pointed out, Wright was correct that the inferior pigment smalt, which he could have used for all of the blue areas, is unstable but far cheaper.<sup>61</sup> However she also notes that Wright used only a small quantity of ultramarine as a glaze over an undercoat of smalt which was laid over an opaque grey and the colour has visibly faded in places, retaining its original brilliance in only a few areas, for example under the fingers of Mrs Salesbury's left hand.<sup>62</sup> Wright was unusual in combining natural resin with his oil paints which affected the drying time and handling of the paint as well as adding a high gloss, giving a fine finish and allowing him to deliver the portraits to the owner when they were barely dry; the portrait of Mrs Salesbury and the children took a mere ten weeks from start to delivery.<sup>63</sup>

Speed of delivery as well as cost was evidently an important consideration and the resin must have speeded things up, however Wright continued to be anxious about whether the portraits were sufficiently dry when they arrived at Blythfield, noting in October 1676:

I have delivered to him<sup>64</sup> your last pieces of Madam Salesbury and your own for Mr Thellwell, well cased up on Friday last, which I think will be with you almost within a day as soon as this; I desire the case may be opened when it comes to you, for I fear you may have done some prejudice to the first pictures I sent you in keeping them so close and so long without air as he says you have done never having opened the case since you had it. Pray sir, let all the picture be taken out and set upon chairs round in the great room of your other pictures or hung up in several rooms if one will not hold them, while that be ready, where you design them, for, new Pictures must have air.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Bustin, 'John Michael Wright' (1617-1794), p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Bustin, 'John Michael Wright', p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Francis Astbury, presumably a household member.

<sup>65</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd Letters, 304 (October 24 1676).

Concerns with the artist's own status are evident in the Bachymbyd letters where Wright constantly appeals to friendship, suggesting his ambition to be regarded as a member of the Bagot household. He writes for example:

I am told the King will sit to my great picture for the city this next month, which perhaps may hinder my coming into Staffordshire this vacation, which I should be very sorry for, for my heart is with you, yet if I do not come I beg one kind remembrance at the syllabubs and stag-hunting. Please Sir, to let this present my humble devotion to my Lady and to you and yours the accomplishment of all happiness according to the desires of. [sentence unfinished] I beg your favour to present me to Mr Lambert, and Mrs Floyd. If you have not heard who Sir Herbert Crofts married, it is a Warwickshire Lady Miss Archer, niece to Alderman Blackwell.<sup>66</sup>

Several other gentry and aristocratic families are mentioned in the letters and in yet another appeal for his bill to be paid, he wrote: 'Now, Sir, as you desire to know what I am more to expect from you, I shall only say I hope you will be no less kind than Sir Thomas Willbraham, Sir Charles Wolesly and all others'.<sup>67</sup> These comments suggest that Wright was well aware of the agency which portraits had to define social status, linking and ranking families among their peers and neighbours. It is also clear that he regarded himself as a conduit in the business of competing for rank, something which he may have been aware made his own status ambiguous. He may however have had some grounds to hope that his relationship with the Bagots went beyond a mere commercial transaction, since he had been in contact with the family since 1670 when Sir Walter's father used his studio as a *post restante* address in London.<sup>68</sup> It seems from the tone of the letters however, that the Bagots regarded Wright as less than an equal, at all times resisting his pleas for swift payment.

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<sup>66</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd letters 299 v (July 27<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>67</sup> NLW, Bachymbyd letters 303 (October 9<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>68</sup> Karen Hearn, 'John Michael Wright, Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot, 1675-6' (2001), [tate.org.uk/art/wright-portrait-of-mrs-salesbury-with-her-grandchildren-edward-and-elizabeth-bagot-t06750, Accessed May 2016].

## ii. The Utkinton Inventory

The rare survival of the Utkinton inventory has allowed for another glimpse of the cost of patronage as well as of the relationship between artist and patron.<sup>69</sup> The inventory is in at least two hands, one of which, the accounts, is probably written by an unnamed artist or his agent; the other is likely to be the hand of John Crewe's wife, Mary or perhaps her steward.<sup>70</sup> This document names at least three artists employed by the family, who provided them with original paintings and copies. While it is not the primary concern of this thesis to do so, an effort has been made to identify these artists since it provides some background to the commissioning practices of the Crewe family. The first artist is referred to as 'Lupo' or 'Lupor', for example 'my brother's picture by Lupor' or 'a hand copyd by Lupo from vandike'; unfortunately as yet, it has not been possible to identify this man.<sup>71</sup> The next named artist is named Blackburn: for example: 'Sir Richard Wilbram per Blackburne'.<sup>72</sup> It seems probable that this Blackburn was a man employed as a journeyman painter in the studio of Daniel King of Chester in 1640.<sup>73</sup> King was admitted to the Painter-Stainers' Company of Chester by apprenticeship with one of the Randle Holmes in 1639, leaving Chester to work as an engraver and publisher in London.<sup>74</sup>

Blackburn may have been working with another artist on the Crewe commissions, since a different entry refers to 'Blackburnes picture per Hanyman'. Although there is little to link this second man to Cheshire, he may be the Adrian 'Hanaman or Hanneman' (1601 or 1604-1671), born in The Hague but later living in Holborn in London, whom Tittler has

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<sup>69</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/20-27, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>70</sup> The reason for this assumption is the reference to 'my mother's room' in which were displayed portraits of Mary Crewe's grandparents, Sir Thomas and Lady Wilbraham and Sir John and Lady Done.

<sup>71</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/23, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*; Richard Wilbraham was Mary Done's grandfather.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Tittler, 'Early Modern British Painters Interim database'; 259 Mr Blackbourne and 1549 Daniel King

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*.

identified as working under Daniel Mytens and may possibly have assisted Van Dyck.<sup>75</sup>

Described as ‘a picture-maker’, this man returned to The Hague in c. 1638 and painted numerous English Royalists in exile there during the Civil Wars. It is possible that both Blackburn and Hanaman were working for the Crewes, or that Blackburn was copying the work of the better known Hanaman. In the pictures hanging in the nursery at Utkinton Hall there is one described as ‘Hanima a Dutch Painter’; evidently the latter retained strong links with the Netherlands.<sup>76</sup>

Two other men are named in the Utkinton inventory, they are known as ‘Mr Hoddeleton’ and ‘Mr Comaunder’. The use of the respectful form of address, and the fact that they appear in the accounts section of the inventory, suggests that these men were acting as agents, collecting money and settling accounts in Chester and London. Sadly, it is not possible to identify which of the artists discussed above presented the accounts. The cost of patronage for John Crewe was high. Under the heading ‘A note of what works I have done’ and taking the form of a set of accounts presented to him by the artist, the first section is a list of works submitted, while the second is a list of payments received.<sup>77</sup> Under the heading: ‘some done formerly’ were portraits of ‘The Lady Bedford’, ‘The Lady Briggs her picture in black and white’, ‘The Italian Lady in black and white’ and ‘the copy after the mould’. The portrait of Lady Bedford cost John Crewe £2 10s, the other portraits £1 10s, but for the copy he was charged only £1. The next section of the accounts is headed ‘Since I last came I drew the Queene’ (the cost was £2 10s).<sup>78</sup>

The artists (Blackburn or Lupo) then submitted bills for more expensive commissions including portraits of ‘Sir John Done and his lady in one peece’ (£5), Mrs

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 1201 ‘Hanaman, Hanneman’.

<sup>76</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/22, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>77</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/23, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



Jane Done (£2 10s), 'Thomas's wife, sonne and daughter in one peece' (£13 6s 8d), Mrs Arden (£2 10s 0d),<sup>79</sup> 'a coppie after Titian' (£5) 'My fathers picture in black and white' (£1 10s) 'A little one of mistris Done' (£1) and 'A little one of Mistress Betty' (£1 10s).<sup>80</sup> Most of these were portraits of members of the closely related Crewe and Done families and it is worth noting that the family group of 'Thomas's wife, son and daughter' cost more than twice the other portraits, an increase which might relate to the scale of the work, the complexity of the composition or the cost of materials. The outstanding bill for these portraits was £41 6s 8d, however, the artist had evidently already been paid £27 7s 0d and the total charge was therefore more than £68. Payments were made both in Chester and London, either directly 'given to mee by your selfe' or to the artist's wife 'paid to my wife Christmas last'. Sometimes an intermediary was involved in the transaction, 'More paid to my wife by Mr Hoddelston' and 'More by Mr Commander when he went to London'.<sup>81</sup> The Crewe's expenses pale into insignificance when compared to the levels of expenditure of their neighbours the Cholmondeleys, where the value of the paintings in the Great Parlour and Drawing Room alone in 1681 was £68.<sup>82</sup>

Patronage was generally within the patriarchal norms of the period, since although wives often managed household spending, men had control over spending on a substantial item such as a portrait. However some women, mainly rich, and often aristocratic widows, commissioned portraits; examples are Mary Nevill and Anne Clifford.<sup>83</sup> Although it was

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<sup>79</sup> Mrs Arden Mary Crewe's niece Elenor, who married Ralph Arden of Harden. The Arden or Arderne family held a share of the manor of Utkinton and were therefore neighbours of the Crewe family, Ormerod Vol. II pt i, p. 249.

<sup>80</sup> John Crewe married Mary Done and through her inherited Utkinton Hall, these were close members of her family.

<sup>81</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/23Vi, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

<sup>82</sup> CRO, DCH/K/6/1-3, Cholmondeley Hall Inventory.

<sup>83</sup> Hans Eworth, *Mary Nevill, Lady Dacre*; *Gregory Fiennes, 10th Baron Dacre*, 1559, oil on panel, The National Portrait Gallery, London; Jan van Belcamp, *The Great Picture Triptych*, 1646, oil on canvas, Abbot Hall Art Gallery.

not unusual for widows to commission sculpted memorials to their husbands there are few examples of gentry widows commissioning portraits of their families.<sup>84</sup> The widow of a wealthy London merchant, Alice Barnham, who is depicted with her sons Stephen and Martin, is a rare exception (Fig. 1:8).<sup>85</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin makes clear that this portrait was commissioned both as a memorial to Alice Barnham's husband and to present herself as a model of virtuous motherhood however, she is 'the portrait's 'sole author and patron'.<sup>86</sup>



Figure 1:8 English School, *Alice Barnham and her Sons Martin and Steven*, 1557, oil on panel, Berger Collection, Denver, USA

Another gentry widow who commissioned a portrait of her husband as a posthumous memorial was Lady Dorothy Shirley, widow of Sir Henry Unton; who was responsible for

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<sup>84</sup> Lady Alice Lucy for example, commissioned her husband's memorial.

<sup>85</sup> English School, *Alice Barnham and Her Sons Martin and Steven*, 1557, oil on panel, Berger Collection, Denver, US.

<sup>86</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, pp. 64 and 43.

commissioning the large narrative painting of her first husband in 1596 (Fig.1:9).<sup>87</sup> It was more common for widowers to commission portraits of their dead wives, among the best-known of which is Sir Thomas Aston's portrait of his wife, Lady Magdalene on her deathbed in 1635 (Chapter Six Case study 1).



Figure 1: 9 Unknown artist, *Sir Henry Unton*, 1596, oil on panel, National Portrait Gallery, London

Grandparents, particularly grandfathers, also commissioned portraits of their grandchildren. One such is the portrait of Sir Edward Pytts and his grandson Edward of Kyre Park, Worcestershire (Chapter Three Case Study 1) and as noted, Sir Walter Bagot commissioned several portraits of his children with their grandmothers (Chapter Three Case Study 2 a and b). While grandparents commissioned portraits of their grandchildren, the reverse is rarely true, however adult children occasionally commissioned portraits of their parents, for example the portrait of several generations of the St John family was commissioned in 1615 by Sir John St John, depicted standing to the left, with his father,

<sup>87</sup> National Portrait Gallery, 'The Portrait of Sir Henry Unton (c. 1558 - 1596)', (2017), [<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/case-studies/the-portrait-of-sir-henry-untion-c.-1558-1596.php>, Accessed May 2017].

another Sir John kneeling across a prayer table with his wife, Lucy in the centre.<sup>88</sup> (Fig. 1:10). This is consistent with its function as a church memorial.



Figure 1:10 British Artist, *Triptych portrait of the St John Family*, 1615, St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze,

#### f. Hierarchies of hanging

It is rare to find portraits in their original context; this is a shame since portraits acquire meaning not only through aspects of scale and content, but through the spaces in which they were displayed and the audiences who viewed them.<sup>89</sup> Sources which reveal original hanging designs in gentry households are particularly rare, nevertheless this section will attempt to piece the evidence together drawing mainly on evidence from the Utkinton inventory.<sup>90</sup> The symbolic nature of hanging schemes was certainly understood

<sup>88</sup> Henry Lancaster, 'St John, Sir John, 1st Bt. (1586-1648), of Lydiard Tregoze, Wilts.', [http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/st-john-sir-john-1586-1648, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>89</sup> See: Gillian Perry, Kate Retford, Jordan Vibert and Hannah Lyons, *Placing Faces : The Portrait and the English Country House in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

<sup>90</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/20-27, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

by wealthy families and advice was available from Henry Wotton in his discourse, *The Elements of Architecture* where he offered what he called: ‘a caution or two, about the disposing of pictures within’ [the house].’<sup>91</sup>

... First that no Room be furnished with too many, which in truth were a Surfeit of Ornament, unless they be Galleries or some peculiar Repository for rarities of Art, ... Lastly, that they be as properly bestowed for their quality, as fitly for their grace: that is, cheerful Paintings in Feasting and Banqueting Rooms: Graver Stories in Galleries, Landscapes, and Boscage, and such wild works in open Terraces, or in Summer houses (as we call them) and the like.<sup>92</sup>

## **i. Halls**

The rooms in gentry houses reflected the family’s social and gender relationships, each announcing the taste and standing of the owner as well as the relative importance of members of the household.<sup>93</sup> As such, the configuration of objects and decorations were an essential part of self-fashioning and as Wotton urges, portraits were hung according to their ‘quality’, offering a visual reminder of the hierarchy of the household to its members and guests as they moved from room to room. For the earliest period the most favoured places for the display of portraits were halls or great halls, galleries, chambers and parlours. These were generally viewed as public spaces for entertaining visitors while rooms such as closets, bedchambers and withdrawing rooms were used by the family as private areas, but also for the display of portraits.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Henry Wotton, *The Elements of Architecture, collected by Henry Wotton Knight, from the best authors and examples*. (London: Printed by John Bill, 1624), p. 99.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 99-100.

<sup>93</sup> Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680* (New Haven ;London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in association with English Heritage by Yale University Press, 1999).

J. T. Cliffe, *The World of the Country House in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1999); Maurice Howard, *The Building of Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, (The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>94</sup> Robert Tittler, ‘Faces and Spaces: Displaying the Civic Portrait in Early Modern England’, in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Surrey, England and Burlington, USA: Ashgate, 2010), p.179; Tara Hamling, ‘Living with the Bible in Post-Reformation England: The Materiality of Text, Image and Object in Domestic Life’, in *Religion and the Household*, ed. by Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham John Doran (Rochester, Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2014), pp. 210-39. For discussion of closets especially pp. 213 – 217.

The symbolic nature of domestic spaces for hanging portraits is illustrated by the Utkinton Hall inventory where rooms are described in a sequence as follows: ‘the hall’, ‘the withdrawing room next the hall’, ‘the parlour’, ‘the withdrawing room next the parlour’, ‘the great parlour’, ‘the room over’, ‘the room over the parlour’, ‘my mother’s room’, ‘the nursery’ and ‘the gallery chamber’. This sequence moves progressively from the most public areas to the family spaces of ‘my mother’s room’ and the ‘nursery’. It is unclear what the function of the ‘gallery chamber’ was, perhaps it was an attic, office or study since there does not seem to have been a long gallery at Utkinton.

Until the early seventeenth century, the most public space in gentry houses was the great hall which was used to receive guests as well as for dining; its divisions of high and low ends reflected the household’s hierarchy. During the sixteenth century most open great halls were replaced with single storey halls, usually with high status room inserted above.<sup>95</sup> This was a common arrangement and the hall at Utkinton probably falls into this category. Visitors there were confronted by portraits of: ‘King Charles the second’, ‘Lord Chief Justice Hale’, ‘Lord Viscount Savage’, ‘Bishop Wilkins’ ‘John Gough; ‘Old Alcock with the dogs, Hector cue, morratt and Shavar’ ‘Lady Briggs in dead colours’;<sup>96</sup> ‘Queen Anne’, ‘Rosamond’ ‘An Old man, and a Woman’, ‘Heracles at Temocratus with a globe’ – ‘Earl of Bedford’, ‘Duke Hamilton’, ‘Earl of Tyrconnel’, ‘Mr Blackburn’ and ‘Sir Kenelm Digby’.<sup>97</sup> This was a confusing collection of images, partly designed to highlight the family’s illustrious associates, though contrasted with the presence of a portrait of ‘Old Alcock with the dogs’ which hinted at more domestic themes, but identified John Crewe and his family as typical country squires with servants to command and dogs with which

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<sup>95</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 278.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Dead colours’ may be the first application of paint on a canvas or panel; Ralph Mayer, *A Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques* (New York: Crowell, 1969) p. 107.

<sup>97</sup> CRO, 6/2/694/23, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644,

to pursue game. A similarly eclectic collection of portraits was hung in the room described as the 'Green Gallery' at Cholmondeley Old Hall in 1687, including 'on the south side next the garden' '1 piece of fruit and flowers' another of Pottiphar's wife, two portraits of Mr Corbett and his wife, two copies of the king and queen and on the north side some Dutch paintings, a painting of fruit and lobsters and a painting of a 'naked woman', apparently of no value.<sup>98</sup>

## ii. Galleries

Galleries or long galleries were a fashion adopted by gentle and aristocratic families by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>99</sup> Tara Hamling calls them: 'an essential component of the ideal suite of formal rooms'.<sup>100</sup> They were usually situated at the top and rear of houses because they were originally used for indoor walking and for admiring the garden. Many were subsequently adapted for other indoor pastimes and after the mid-sixteenth century, frequently housed portrait collections.<sup>101</sup> In line with the advice offered by Henry Wotton (above) galleries contained 'graver stories', more serious subjects, designed to reflect the thoughtful and reflective mind of the householder.<sup>102</sup> Hamling's forensic analysis of the ceiling of the long gallery at Lanhydrock House in Cornwall makes it clear that these were spaces for the display of learning and piety.<sup>103</sup>

In her will of 1634 Lady Dorothy Shirley, widow of Sir Henry Unton of Faringdon in Berkshire refers to 'all my story pictures in my Gallery there' [at Faringdon House] 'unless [except] the picture of Sir Henry Unton which I do give and bequeath to my loving

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<sup>98</sup> CRO, DCH/K/6/1-3, Cholmondeley Hall Inventory, 1687.

<sup>99</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 301; Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter Six, pp. 226-261.

<sup>100</sup> Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), p. 174.

<sup>101</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 303.

<sup>102</sup> 'Stories' probably either referred to narrative subjects or to framed portraits see footnote 100 below.

<sup>103</sup> Hamling, *Decorating*, pp. 174-198.



niece the Lady Deering.’<sup>104</sup> An inventory of 1620 describes Faringdon House as having: ‘a hall, a parlour and a great chamber hung with arras and adorned with pictures.’<sup>105</sup> There was also a gallery described as being hung with green: ‘at the upper end were fifteen English pictures hangd in tables,’ at the lower were twenty-eight ‘pictures of Romans and Emperors’.<sup>106</sup> There were also two pairs of virginals, suggesting that the gallery at Faringdon House was used for musical entertainment among other pastimes. It is not clear exactly where Sir Henry’s portrait was displayed but it is apparent that it was associated with appropriate and serious figures from classical antiquity and placed in a space with fitting symbols of his status, wealth and education.<sup>107</sup>

### **iii. Parlours, withdrawing rooms and great chambers**

Nicholas Cooper describes parlours as ‘The most persistent of all rooms’ and the place where the family conducted everyday eating, sitting and informal entertaining, while the great chamber and dining chambers had more formal and public functions.<sup>108</sup> Lena Corwen Orlin refers to the parlour as a room with ‘multiple personalities’ which could be ‘a bedroom, a dining chamber, or both simultaneously, and [it] switched identities and functions as required, to suit family exigencies and life passages’.<sup>109</sup> Withdrawing rooms appear from the sixteenth century and functioned as private places for family dining, offices or seating areas.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> TNA, PROB/11/167/311, Will of Lady Dorothy Shirley, 1635; Story pictures refers to framed pictures: Susan Foister, ‘Paintings and Other Works of Art in Sixteenth-Century English Inventories’, *The Burlington Magazine*, 123 (1981), p. 275.

<sup>105</sup> William Page and P H Ditchfield (eds), ‘Parishes: Great Faringdon’, in *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 4*, (London, 1924), pp. 489-499 [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol4/pp489-499> accessed 16 January 2015].

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> M. Greengrass, ‘Unton, Sir Henry (c.1558–1596)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28001>, accessed 19 April 2017].

<sup>108</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 289.

<sup>109</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p. 146.

<sup>110</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, p. 292.



Parlours, withdrawing rooms, great chambers and dining chambers were all suitable places to hang portraits and paintings of all kinds, including family portraits and many were large enough to accommodate the large scale of group portraits. It is possible that the rooms depicted in portraits such as the Saltonstall family group, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his wife* and the portrait of the Burdett family were realistic depictions of the parlours or bedchambers in their respective homes, an idea suggested by the presence of beds in these portraits and the private nature of their subjects (Figs 6:19, 6:3 and 2:29).

In the absence of a dining chamber, the ‘great parlour’ at Utkinton Hall may have been the most important public room for dining and entertaining. The portraits hung here were of senior, close family members and itemised as: ‘Sir John Crewe’s former Lady’<sup>111</sup>, ‘Sir John Done and his Lady’<sup>112</sup>, ‘John Leigh of Adlington’, ‘Sir Randle Crewe and his lady’, ‘Lord Crewe of Stean and two sons’;<sup>113</sup> Visitors to Utkinton, arriving in the hall, proceeding up the stairs to the great chamber would have been left in no doubt as to the status of the Crewe family and their illustrious connections. The numbers of group portraits hung in this room suggest its large size while the content of the portraits signify dominance and long lineage. The portraits here nurtured the notion of what Alexandra Walsham called ‘the wider penumbra of living and dead kin, who hovered on the perimeter of the inner circle and periodically exerted powerful influence within it.’<sup>114</sup> The great parlour at Utkinton was typical of many such rooms, which were highly significant sites of

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<sup>111</sup> John Crewe’s grandmother, Ormerod Vol. III pt. i, p.314

<sup>112</sup> Mary Crewe’s parents:, Ormerod Vol. II pt. i. p. 249.

<sup>113</sup> Probably John Crewe’s uncle, created Lord Crewe of Stene. Ormerod Vol. III, pt. i p.314.

<sup>114</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘Holy Families: The Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited’, in *Religion and the Household*, ed. by John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham (Rochester: Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2014), p. 124.

memory, constantly reminding subsequent generations of the family of their collective identity, reputation, status and the mutual obligations which linked the generations.

Utkinton Hall had two rooms described as ‘withdrawing rooms’, the first ‘next the hall’, was probably on the ground floor. The inventory suggests that many of the paintings there had been, or were to be, moved to other family houses either Harden, Stockport or Pepper Hall. The portraits in the withdrawing room were a mix of family portraits including a group of Sir Clipsby Crewe and his family ‘in one piece’<sup>115</sup> together with more general subjects such as ‘Prince Edward done by Holben’<sup>116</sup>, ‘A Lady in dead Colours’ ‘a little landskip’ and ‘a little piece’. The other room described as ‘the with-drawing Room’ seems to have been off the great parlour where there were portraits of other illustrious individuals and family members including ‘The Old Duke of Albermarle,’ ‘my uncle’, ‘Aunt Crewe,’ ‘cous: Devereux’, ‘Knightley the Younger’ and others.<sup>117</sup>

#### **iv. Private rooms and bedchambers**

The private rooms at Utkinton were probably occupied by John Crewe’s mother-in-law, Lady Dorothy Done and described as ‘my mother’s room’ and ‘the nursery’.<sup>118</sup> The portraits hung there were of ‘Sir Richard Wilbraham and his lady’ and ‘Sir John Done, and his lady’, Mary Crewe’s maternal and paternal grandparents.<sup>119</sup> The use of portraits of close family members in these private spaces cemented intimate relationships and strengthened family ties, fostering affection and unity and were important in the making of family memories. The nursery appears to have been close to the children’s grandmother’s

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<sup>115</sup> Sir Clipsby Crewe was John Crewe’s brother, his wife was Jane (née Poultney), they had three children, Ormerod, Vol. III pt. i p. 314.

<sup>116</sup> Probably a copy after Holbein of Edward the son of King Henry VIII.

<sup>117</sup> The Devereux and Knightleys married into subsequent generations of the family, Ormerod Vol. II, pt i, p. 249).

<sup>118</sup> This suggests the inventory was taken by Mary Crewe.

<sup>119</sup> Ormerod, Vol. II, pt. I, p. 249. Lady Done may have come to live with her son after she was widowed in 1629.

room, which evidently contained another room, perhaps a closet, described as: ‘There is another in the room within my Mother’s Chamber’ in which was hung another painting done by the Dutch artist ‘Hanima’.<sup>120</sup>

### **Chapter One: conclusion**

This chapter links the material and stylistic aspects of portrait production with their uses, the environments in which they were displayed and the patrons who commissioned them. Portraits were key elements in the performance of gentility and it was argued that their stylistic and material fluidity created the visual language which articulated their meaning, especially in relation to the mutable nature of social status. This chapter also drew attention to the fact that the portraits existed within a set of interlinked cultural practices through which the gentry and other elite social groups defined themselves and made links with similarly ranked families. These practices were focussed particularly on their family houses, land and parish church which became loci for the display of material wealth, refined taste, education, piety and status and to exhibit behaviours such as collecting and particular leisure activities like hunting.

The chapter which follows builds on these observations by focussing on the family unit, its idealisation and its mutability through time.

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<sup>120</sup> CRO, 63/2/694/23, The Utkinton Inventory, 1644.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE FAMILY UNIT : 'NUCLEAR' FAMILIES

#### Introduction

The English family unit, its size, structure, function and mutability, has been the subject of lively scholarship over several decades.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Stone first claimed that the English family could be characterised between about 1500 and 1800 by stages of family formation from restricted patriarchal families to the closed nuclear family of the modern era; stages, he claimed which were mirrored by the evolution of the modern capitalist economy and by increasing levels of parental attachment and affection.<sup>2</sup> This simple linear model was challenged by subsequent scholars including Alan Macfarlane who questioned Stone's methodology and selective use of sources.<sup>3</sup> Others have continued to challenge Stone's work; Keith Wrightson for example showed how individuals modified the apparently rigid structure of family life while Linda Pollock demonstrated that there were affectionate relationships in families over many centuries.<sup>4</sup> In more recent years historians have considered whether it is possible to speak of 'the English family' in any meaningful way at all, since it was an institution of such diversity and mutability.<sup>5</sup> While acknowledging the importance of these debates, this thesis argues that its particular social focus and

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984); Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1980); Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900 : England, France and the United States of America*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); Sandra Carvallo, 'Family Relationships', in *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Early Modern Age*, ed. by Sandra Carvallo and Silvia Evangelisti, (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Alan MacFarlane, 'Review of Stone, *Family Sex and Marriage in England, History and Theory*', 18 (1979), pp. 103-26.

<sup>4</sup> Wrightson, Keith, *English Society 1580-1680* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Linda Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Will Coster, *Family and Kinship in England 1450-1800* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 5-7; Naomi Tadmor, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past & Present* (1996), 111-40; Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

transitional time scale contribute new perspectives to the field, shifting the focus both onto portraits and towards individual family experiences and narratives.

This thesis also argues that as active agents in the construction and expression of ‘the family’, portraits, like the church and the law, controlled individuals and regulated family life. This was done by presenting patriarchy, with its subordination of wives and children, as normal or ideal and apparently sanctioned by scripture. The gentry, like the aristocracy, were concerned with ancestry, generation and gender and in particular, it is asserted, family portraits reveal aspects of the ideology which framed gender roles and underpinned relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, reflecting the ‘ideal’ pattern of family life provided by the church, which imposed moral obligations and legal restraints on marriage and the raising of children. Like sermons and other advice literature, portraits are a form of prescriptive evidence, which may have been far removed from people’s experience which were idealised representations set before peers and future generations.<sup>6</sup>

#### **a. Patriarchy**

Portraits of royal families were important as exemplars of the ‘ideal’ family, something predicated on the belief that the state should be modelled on the family. Both King James I and King Charles I commonly described their relationship to their kingdom in familial, patriarchal terms and sought to construct their identities as loving fathers with the duty to provide care for the nation. Images of royal families served as visual prompts for normative gender roles, with the wife and her children subordinate to the father, an arrangement seen as being sanctioned by God and nature.<sup>7</sup> An example is Holbein’s

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<sup>6</sup> See: O’Day, *The Family*, Chapter Two ‘The Prescriptive Family; for influential advice literature see: William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*, (London, 1622).

<sup>7</sup> For discussion of the ways in which images of the royal family influenced portraiture see: Jonathan Goldberg, ‘Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images’, in *Re-Writing the Renaissance: The*

‘Whitehall’ mural, first commissioned in 1536 which represents the Tudor dynasty with the men arranged on the viewers’ left in hierarchical order of seniority, with their wives on the right of the frame, posed in a three-quarter turn towards their husbands, their hands folded in passive gestures. A copy of 1667 is illustrated as Fig. 2:1.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 2:1 Remigius van Leemput, after Hans Holbein the Younger, *Henry VII, Elizabeth of York, Henry VIII and Jane Seymour*, 1667, oil on canvas, Hampton Court Palace, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 404750

More readily accessible images such as woodcuts reinforced the traditional view of the family unit as consisting of a father with his wife and their children. The availability of printed books and ballads illustrated with woodcuts increased during the sixteenth and

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*Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maureen Quilligan Margaret Ferguson, Nancy Vickers, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 3; O'Day, *The Family*, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> The original of this portrait was destroyed in a fire of 1698, two copies survive: Shearer West, *Portraiture*, *Oxford History of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 109; King Charles I regarded portraiture as an essential tool in shaping his identity and used the services of the court artist Van Dyck to enhance his image; see Julia Marciari-Alexander, 'Portraiture and Royal Family Ties: Kings, Queens, Princes, and Princesses in Caroline England', in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Farnham, England and Vermont, USA: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 209-21.

seventeenth centuries reaching a wider social group than portraits, including the gentry.<sup>9</sup> Depicting the family in recognisably domestic settings, images like Fig. 2:2, a woodcut from *A Book of Psalms* stresses the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of the ideal early modern family where the father occupies a dominant position in the group, here, catechising his wife and children who are ranged before him in subservient poses. As in royal portraits, wives are depicted on their husbands' left in the inferior or 'sinister' position where they either gesture, or turn towards their husband, signifying their respect and duty of obedience; the children's close association with their mother's body signifies her responsibility for them and their dependence on her. Family portraits rarely subvert or challenge this accepted order.



Figure 2:2 A woodcut of a family, from *The Tenor of the Whole Psalms in Four parts*, 1563, woodcut, Bridgeman Art Image: STC347514

The concept of the ideal or model family unit was reinforced in other material form, particularly in household decoration. Tara Hamling draws attention to the ways in which various surfaces in the home supported imagery, which though of overtly Biblical subjects, served to promote orthodox messages about gender and family roles as being

<sup>9</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 5.

divinely sanctioned.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the most common and accessible place where the gendered norms of patriarchal marriage were displayed was in parish churches, where sculpted monuments, like portraits, reminded people of all ranks of the ‘correct’, model family. As Nigel Llewellyn asserts:

The patriarchal assumption that social groupings of all kinds, from individual families to whole nations, were units with fathers at their head is reflected in the way that monuments made a public demonstration of the political and economic dominion of the male over the female.<sup>11</sup>

Marriage was privileged as the bond upon which the household was founded and writers of domestic conduct books and other literature were at pains to differentiate the roles of men and women within the family, men were destined to rule, women to obey.<sup>12</sup> Notions of what constitutes a family change through time, but the nuclear or ‘elementary family’, consisting of a married couple and their children, was commonly depicted in gentry portraits.<sup>13</sup> This arrangement reflected the practice of primogeniture among English families where the oldest son inherited his father’s land and title, leaving his younger brothers to find homes and careers for themselves and sisters to find marriage partners and establish new families.<sup>14</sup> Concern with the survival of the family name and estate through the production of an heir is a crucial element in portraits of gentry families where the oldest son is almost always singled out for special treatment. Commonly this is through a hand laid on his shoulder or by specific props, particularly hats, both details which are evident in the portrait of Lady Elizabeth Pope and her children (Fig. 2:3).

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<sup>10</sup> Tara Hamling, *Decorating the ‘Godly’ Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 284.

<sup>12</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Houlbrooke notes that the practice of primogeniture could lead to resentment from younger family members: *Ibid.* p. 42; see also: Linda Pollock, ‘Younger Sons in Tudor and Stuart England.’ *History Today* 39:6, June (1989), pp. 23-29.





Figure 2:3 English School, *Lady Elizabeth Pope, with her eldest son Thomas and daughter Anne*, 1625-6, oil on canvas, private collection

In portraits of nuclear families, parents commonly occupy either the centre of the portrait, with children ranged beside or below them, or ‘bookend’ their children. The popularity of this type of family structure in portraits suggests its enduring and instantly recognisable nature which was sanctioned by society and the church. Its popularity in portraits may reside in the ease with which family unity can be represented by tightly packing the children and their parents together, their bodies overlapping, as for example in the Aldersley portrait (Fig. 1:1). Occasionally the position of husband and wife is reversed, placing the husband to the viewers’ right in the picture frame. Where this is the case

however, his dominance is always suggested in other ways, either by his height or central position in the portrait as is represented by the Ottley family group (Fig. 1:5).

Importantly, images of nuclear families allowed for the depiction of mutuality between husband and wife, in the Burdett group for example, this is done through the clasping of hands, signifying unity through the marriage bond (see Case Study 2 below). Elsewhere, for example in the Holme portrait, husband and wife display their shared faith by holding the same book, a Bible or prayer book (Fig.2:4). Mutuality was considered desirable in marriage, while parental love was considered natural and the whole unit was viewed as being held within the constraints of paternal authority and obedience, which was itself sanctioned by the authority of God.<sup>15</sup> The clergyman and author William Gouge, in his popular treatise on domestic life, *Of Domesticall Duties*, first published in 1622 posits mutuality as a prerequisite for marriage and advises couples to choose a partner where there was:

Of equality in years betwixt husband and wife,  
Of equality in estates and condition betwixt those that are to be married together  
Of equality in piety and religion betwixt those that are to be married together  
...  
Of that mutual liking which must pass betwixt marriageable persons before they be married.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, Chapter 4, 'The Making of Marriage', pp.63-78.

<sup>16</sup> William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, (1622), II Treatise pt I



Figure 2:4 English School, *The Holme Family*, 1628, oil on panel with carved decoration, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

#### **b. Wives/mothers**

While a high proportion of the portraits considered here, (thirty one percent) depict the traditional nuclear grouping of children and two parents, perhaps it is surprising that the most common form of family arrangement, (forty five percent) is of a mother, step-mother or grandmother depicted on her own with either one or several, children; Fig. 2:3, is an example.<sup>17</sup> These lone wives/mothers are generally posed in neutral or curtained spaces, sometimes with coats of arms and adorned with the usual female props of jewels, fans and elaborate clothing and always either touching or holding a child.

There may be a number of reasons for the absence of fathers in these portraits. For example, by the second half of the sixteenth century there was evidently a continuing acceptance by patrons and artists of the visual conventions inherited from Tudor

<sup>17</sup> Other examples are: English School, *The Tasburgh Group Lettice Cressy, Lady Tasburgh of Bodney, Norfolk and her Children* (Fig. 0:2) and Unknown Artist, *Unknown Lady with Two Children* (Fig. 1:3).

portraiture, outlined above, where the wife is represented in the three-quarter pose, her body slightly turned towards her husband on the left side of the portrait, or towards the place where a companion portrait might have hung. This arrangement is clearly seen in the vignettes of husband and wife in the *Hesketh genealogy* of 1594 and illustrated at a later date on the cover of Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentleman : And the English Gentlewoman* of 1641 (Figs 2:5 and 2:6).<sup>18</sup> The three-quarter turn, suggests Lena Corwen Orlin, indicates a wife's respectful acknowledgement of her husband, including his right to present her to the viewer, claiming authority to mediate between his family and the world, her posture signifying respect and obedience to him, even in his absence.<sup>19</sup> Orlin believes this to be the case in the portrait of Alice Barnham and her sons (Fig. 2:7) where as a widow, Alice demonstrates respect for her absent husband by the turn of her body towards the place, on the viewers' left where tradition would have placed him.<sup>20</sup> This respectful acknowledgement of her husband's place in the composition probably explains his absence in many of the portraits of lone wives/mothers.

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman : And the English Gentlewoman* : (London: printed by Iohn Dawson, 1641); Susan E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603 : Women as Consumers, Patrons, and Painters*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), Chapter Two.

<sup>19</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.



Figure 2:5 Unknown English artist, *The Hesketh Genealogy*, c. 1594, British Library



Figure 2:6 Richard Brathwaite, cover of *The English Gentleman and the English Gentlewoman*, 1641





Figure 2:7 English School, *Alice Barnham and Her Sons Martin and Steven*, 1557, oil on panel, Berger Collection, Denver, USA

Not all these portraits however, follow the same formula and there may be other, idiosyncratic reasons for the depiction of lone mothers; for example, some might be one half of a pendant portrait, the half of the husband/father now lost.<sup>21</sup> Occasionally a portrait may have been commissioned as a memorial to a dead husband, as was probably the case in the portrait of Frances, Lady Willoughby who is represented in mourning alongside her son, the young Lord Willoughby whose father had recently died (Fig. 2:7). However, the death of the husband does not explain his absence in all cases, John Tasburgh for example, though absent from the portrait of his wife Lettice and their children, was alive at the time

<sup>21</sup> This was not the case in the Barnham portrait, *Ibid.* p. 45; There is no evidence from the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art's extensive research that in *The Portrait of an Unknown Lady and her Children*, was ever half a pendant portrait Yale Centre for British Art, 'Dendrochronology: A Lady and Her Two Children', 2013) [<http://www.yale.edu/ycbastudentguides/dendro/lady.html>], [Accessed September 1<sup>st</sup> 2016].

of its commission (Fig. 0:2).<sup>22</sup> Other portraits of mothers alone with children may have been commissioned by the husband/father simply as an act of memorialisation or celebration for a specific event, an example of which may be the portrait of Lady Mary Bowes and her oldest son of 1628, perhaps commissioned to celebrate the birth of an heir, the boy in the portrait (Fig. 2:9).



Figure 2:8 Paul van Somer, *Frances, Lady Willoughby with her son Lord Francis*, 1618-1620, oil on canvas, present location unknown

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<sup>22</sup> A. M. Mimardi re, ‘Tasburgh, John (c.1576-1629), of Beaconsfield and Hawridge, Bucks.; Later of Flixton Abbey, Suff.’ (1981) [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/tasburgh-john-1576-1629>, Accessed May 2017].



Figure 2:9 English School, *Double portrait of Mary, Lady Bowes, Aged 24, and her Eldest son Thomas*, 1630, oil on panel, private collection.

Even when wives forged relatively independent roles for themselves in the public sphere, as in the unusual case of Jane Burdett, discussed below, family portraits subsume women's identities into their roles as wives and mothers, since it was on these that their status depended and was seen as a woman's primary duty, sanctioned by scripture.<sup>23</sup> This duty frames portraits of lone wives/mothers, as does the powerful contemporary ideology of the good women as good wife and caring mother under patriarchal direction.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> I Timothy, ch. 2 v. 15 says that a woman is saved by childbearing.

<sup>24</sup> Patricia Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* ed. by Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), p 13; Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 52.



Depictions of adult males in family portraits embody the period's cultural norms of masculinity, displaying the conventional repertoire of poses and costumes which suggest confident assurance, through an upright posture and steady gaze. As Alexandra Shepard asserts: 'The self-government expected of manhood was the basis of men's claims to authority.'<sup>25</sup> Male honour and reputation were seen to be achieved through assumed qualities of reason, strength and self-control which extended to control of their household and explains why families are normally positioned in ways which suggest paternal dominance.<sup>26</sup> As such, the bodies of wives and children, through gesture and posture, display that, as Elizabeth Foyster notes: 'Men were all too aware that their honour depended on the actions and words of their wives.'<sup>27</sup>

In the portrait of her family (Fig.2:10), for example, Lady Venetia Digby dutifully performs the role prescribed for all subordinate family members, as she gazes admiringly at her husband and simultaneously gestures to two sons, in a pose designed to elevate the status of her husband Sir Kenelm. His bulky body and prominent face leans towards the viewer, his authority emphasised by a framing pillar, swathes of silk and lace and association with objects suggestive of the rational, masculine world of science such as an orrery. Such depictions direct the viewers' imagination to the notion of collective family honour, focussed on the father/husband but descending to his family. There are few instances where a man's public office is represented in family group portraits, which focus instead on men's domestic roles, pointing to the household as an important site of male

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<sup>25</sup> Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England : Honour, Sex and Marriage* (London [i.e. Harlow]: Longman,) 1999, pp.31-32; see also Richard Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History*, 23 (1998), 40-70; Cust, 'William Dugdale and the Honour Politics of Stuart Warwickshire', in *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-1685*, ed. by Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 89-108.

<sup>27</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p. 2.

authority.<sup>28</sup> As the head of his household a man was expected to have mastery over himself, his wife, children and servants in a way which was synonymous with manhood and served as a model for public office.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 2:10 Anthony Van Dyck, *Sir Kenelm Digby and Lady Digby with their Two Sons*, 1632, oil on canvas, Private collection.

### c. Husbands/fathers

A far smaller number of portraits depict fathers, rather than mothers, alone with their children (always sons); among these are the portrait of Walter Raleigh with his son, and Hervey Bagot with his third son (Figs 2:11 and 2:12). The only portrait which depicts a father with more than one son is that of Percyvall Hart and his two sons (Fig.0:1), which was probably commissioned as a mourning piece for the death of a third son.<sup>30</sup> The reason for the paucity of portraits of lone husbands/fathers seems likely to be the elevated position

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<sup>28</sup> One of the rare examples is the key hanging beneath the arm of Sir Edward Pytts in his portrait, (Fig.3:4).

<sup>29</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> Jane Eade, 'The Triptych Portrait in England 1585-1646', *The British Art Journal*, Vol. 6, p. 4.

which marriage and householder status afforded men which, as noted, was regarded as the gateway to manhood and essential to maturity.<sup>31</sup>

As Alexander Niccholes, observes in 1615:

... therefore he that hath no wife is said to be a man unbuilt that wanteth one of his ribbes, asleepe as Adam was till his wife was made, for marriage awaketh the understanding as out of a dreame; and he that hath no wife is said to be a man in the midst of the sea, perishing for want of this ship to waft him to shore.<sup>32</sup>

The presence of a wife beside him was confirmation of a man's maturity and her sexual propriety, a key concern among landed families where a woman's chastity was the only guarantee of paternity.<sup>33</sup> Foyster points to the importance of fidelity in marriage, noting 'There could be no more powerful a way [than a wife's adultery] to wreck male honour.'<sup>34</sup> Writing in 1658, William Sanderson, the historian and author of *Graphice: the Use of the Pen and Pensil*, in his discussion of hanging 'pictures and paintings' even suggests that husbands should display portraits of wives and daughters in the 'private' areas of the house, away from the most public rooms, lest their modesty be compromised.

He writes:

[Portraits of] Your own and your wives or children, best become your discretion, and her modesty, ('if she be faire') to furnish the most private, or Bed-Chamber; lest (being too public) an Italian-minded Guest, gaze too long on them, and commend the work for your wives' sake.<sup>35</sup>

There is a hint here that the presence of a husband in a group portrait functioned to chaperone his wives and daughters, drawing attention to the dangerous erotic potential inherent in portraits of lone wives.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Niccholes, *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (London, 1615), p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, p.101.

<sup>34</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*, p. 66-67.

<sup>35</sup> William Sanderson *Graphice: the Use of the Pen and Pensil, or, The Most Excellent Art of Painting* (London: for Robert Crofts 1658), p 27.

<sup>36</sup> Will Pritchard, 'Woman, That Fair Copy': Gender and Painting in English Writing, 1650-1700', *Word & Image*, Vol.25 (1) (2009), p. 80.



Figure 2:11 Unknown artist, *Sir Walter Raleigh and his Son*, oil on canvas, 1602, NPG



Figure 2:12 Unknown Artist, *Sir Hervey Bagot and his third son Hervey*, 1627, oil on canvas, Blithfield Hall, Staffordshire

#### **d. Children**

While the reputation of the family unit rested on recognisable models of correctly gendered, decorous, married couples, its future was imagined through its children. In

family portraits their ages range from the chubby one-year-old Sarah, in her walker in the Bartholmew portrait (Fig. 1:2) to the almost mature Constance aged fourteen in the Lucy portrait (Fig. 2:15).<sup>37</sup> Depictions of adult children with parents, normally fathers and sons, are mainly limited to portraits of the earliest dates; among the first being Thomas Godsalve and his son of 1528 (Fig. 2:13), while a later example, of 1620, is a portrait of two men in armour, perhaps Sir Thomas Monson and his son (Fig. 2:14). Portraits which depict parents with both adult and pre-adolescent children in the same frame, are the Towneley, Chorley and Markham family groups, all three of which (is argued in Chapter Five) are powerful expressions of familial faith (Figs 5:3, 5:12, and 5:17).

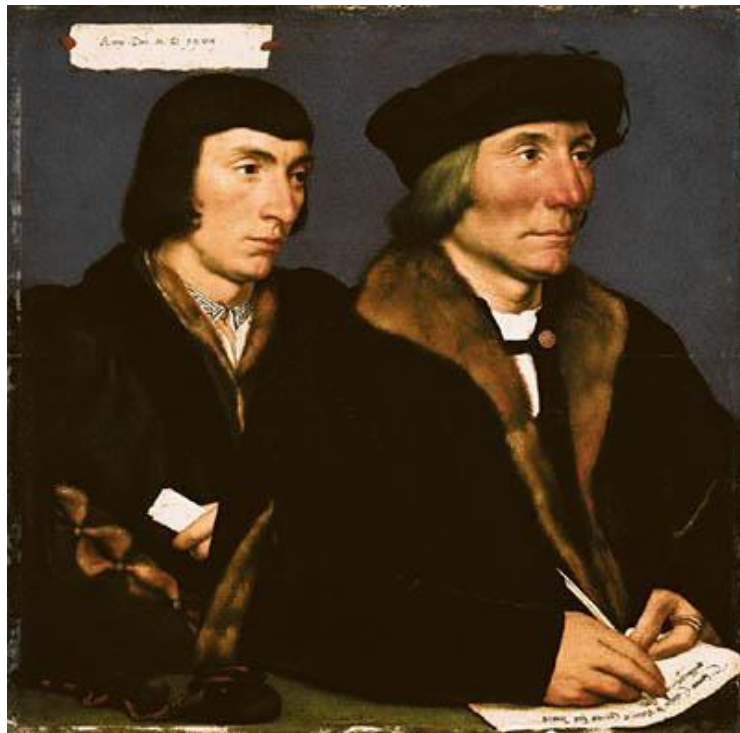


Figure 2:13 Hans Holbein the Younger, *Thomas Godsalve of Norwich and his son, John*, 1528, oil on canvas, Gemäldergalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, Germany.

<sup>37</sup> Important studies on childhood, parent/child and sibling relationships: Keith Thomas, *Age and Authority in Early Modern England*, (London: British Academy, 1976); Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Miller and Yavneh, *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*; Naomi J. Miller, and Naomi Yavneh, *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Pollock, 'Younger Sons'.



Figure 2:14 English School, Two Gentlemen in Armour, perhaps Sir Thomas Monson Bt. and his son Sir John Monson Bt., c. 1620, oil on panel, unknown location

Children in group portraits perform their future adult roles in ways which replicate the gendered and hierarchical adult world of their parents, with birth order and gender as key elements in their depiction. The three oldest girls in the Tasburgh family, Penelope, Jane and Dorothy, for example, advertise their suitability as potential wives and mothers through their elaborate costumes and demure posture which proclaim their chastity and wealth; desirable qualities in elite wives (Fig. 0:2). Their brothers in contrast, assume the confident and assertive poses which will equip them for their future active roles in the world. In the Lucy family portrait (Fig.2:15), as young Spencer Lucy enters the interior domestic space in which his family is posed, he holds before him precious fruit, a bowl of peaches, perhaps gathered from the estate he is to inherit. With this action he performs his future role as oldest son, carrying the peaches with care and confidence, enacting his duty to perpetuate both the stability of the family and the prosperity of the estate.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Whatever their position in the family, ideal parental qualities are expressed through their children and both boys and girls are depicted as inheritors of their parents' virtues and status. The discussion of the Aston portrait in Chapter Six demonstrates how young Thomas Aston replicates his father's piety, grief and erudition through mirrored details of pose, costume, gesture and props. Other examples are the assertive stance and masculine props of the boys in the portraits of Walter Raleigh and his son, and Sir Edward Pytts and his grandson where the boys' poses echo the men's (Figs 2:11 and 3:4) suggesting inherited qualities and virtue.

There is a lacuna in these family groups, which is the scarcity of children in the transitional ages between about fourteen and early adulthood. This was the period of youth, the threshold of adulthood, often considered a problematic phase but critical for the formation of gender when girls were prepared for marriage and boys were expected to leave home for education or training.<sup>39</sup> The few portraits like the Lucy and Tasburgh groups, which do depict children in the fourteen to twenty age group, may have been commissioned to celebrate their children's approaching maturity, transition into adulthood and leaving home, in which case the portraits might be designed to substitute the soon-to-be-absent child with its image.

Like almost every aspect of family life represented in these portraits, relationships between siblings are gendered. Girls commonly communicate with brothers through the exchange of flowers, as for example in the Vyner and Capel portraits (Figs 1:7 and 1:4) in a demonstration of the beauty and fruitfulness they were expected to bring to the family. Brothers, in contrast, hold their sisters' hands or arms as for example in the Tasburgh and Saltonstall portraits where their gestures suggest a duty of both care and control of their

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<sup>39</sup> Miller and Yavneh, *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, p. 5. See also Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, pp. 17-61 for discussions of attitudes towards youth.

sisters (Figs 0:2 and 6:19).<sup>40</sup> Frequently however, siblings appear unaware of one another, neither touching nor exchanging looks; a clear example being the Bartholomew family (Fig. 1:2) where the children are arranged formally in a line by age. Children's attention is more often given to their parents than siblings, perhaps signifying their duty of obedience and respect for parental authority.

The next two sections of this chapter address some of the themes explored above, such as the way in which the composition of these portraits is affected by an acceptance of patriarchy as the normal form of family organisation in nuclear families. This is discussed in more detail through case studies of the Lucy and Burdett families.

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<sup>40</sup> Miller and Yavneh, *Sibling Relations*, p. 12.



## Case Study 1: The Lucy Family



Figure 2:15 British School, *The Family of Thomas Lucy*, c. 1628/30, National Trust Charlecote Park Warwickshire, ©National Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty

The programme of artistic patronage undertaken by Sir Thomas Lucy and his wife, Lady Alice, between about 1610 and 1640, constructed a narrative which, combined with texts, defined the Lucys as the ‘ideal’ gentry family.<sup>41</sup> The thirty-year programme charts the development of their family life and concludes with an imposing sculpted marble monument of the couple in death. These images were augmented with descriptive ‘portraits’ of the pair in printed funeral sermons and eulogies. Examining this programme suggests an evolution of style, material and iconography which offers insights into the ways in which they fashioned their collective identity.<sup>42</sup> It will be maintained that

<sup>41</sup> There were three successive generations of this family called Sir Thomas Lucy who lived at Charlecote Park this study is concerned with the third, sometimes called Sir Thomas Lucy III (c.1532-1640), here he will be simply referred to as Sir Thomas Lucy

<sup>42</sup> The dating of all the painted portraits is imprecise and attributed on the basis of costume and the estimated ages of the sitters, which means that it is hard to establish an exact chronology for these portraits; Richard

particular gestures, poses and types of jewellery found in the portraits of Dame Alice, were important components in her representation as the model of a pious wife and mother - 'the archetype of a godly gentlewoman'.<sup>43</sup>

The Lucys were among senior gentry in Warwickshire in the seventeenth century, claiming lineage which stretched back to the thirteenth. Their principal source of wealth was derived from land in Warwickshire and the neighbouring counties which they consolidated by marrying into similarly ranked families.<sup>44</sup> Sir Thomas's education followed a common pattern for boys of his rank; he was knighted in 1603 and inherited his estate and title on his father's death in 1605.<sup>45</sup> While his early years were spent in literary and artistic circles in London and on the continent, marriage and a return to Charlecote in 1610 brought about a change and he thereafter became the sober family man of his later reputation, serving in the chief county offices, including as MP for Warwickshire where his public service earned him a reputation as a man 'devoted to the service of the common weal'.<sup>46</sup>

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Cust, 'Lucy, Sir Thomas (1583x6–1640)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17152>, accessed 26 April 2017]; Richard Cust, 'William Dugdale and the Honour Politics of Stuart Warwickshire', in *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-1685*, ed. Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 89-108; H. Summerson, 'The Lucys of Charlecote and their library', *National Trust Studies* (1979) *Charlecote Park, Warwickshire*, National Trust, [new edn] (1979).

<sup>43</sup> Richard Cust, 'Lucy, Alice, Lady Lucy (c.1594–1648)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66713>, accessed 26 April 2017]

<sup>44</sup> Robert Bearman, 'Lucy, Sir Thomas (b. in or before 1532, d. 1600)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2015 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17151>, accessed 26 April 2017]

<sup>45</sup> Cust, 'Lucy, Sir Thomas', (2004).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 2:16 William Larkin, *Sir Thomas Lucy III*, c. 1609-10, oil on copper, Charlecote Park  
©National Trust Images/Geoffrey Shakerley



Figure 2:17 William Larkin, *Edward Herbert*, c. 1609-10, oil on copper, Charlecote Park ©National  
Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty

The earliest portrait of Sir Thomas Lucy was commissioned by his good friend Edward Herbert, first Baron Herbert of Cherbury in 1609 from the portraitist William Larkin.<sup>47</sup> Herbert commissioned another of himself and Larkin made three copies, one of

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<sup>47</sup> Christopher Foley. "Larkin, William." *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Oxford University Press, [http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T049381, Accessed Oct. 2016]; James Lees-

which now hangs at Charlecote Park.<sup>48</sup> These portraits drew on Renaissance and classical models of idealised masculinity and provided a kind of template for Sir Thomas's physical appearance and even his inner or moral qualities for use in subsequent portraits.<sup>49</sup> His neutral expression gives him what Shearer West describes as an 'air of dignified repose or concentration'.<sup>50</sup> Both men are dressed in loose Roman togas, bunched at the shoulders, in a style of costume fashionable in masques in James I's court, simultaneously linking them with court circles and referencing classical virtue.<sup>51</sup> These portraits bear a striking resemblance to the miniature portrait of Prince Henry of 1610 by Isaac Oliver (2:21), an important reference, since Prince Henry was seen as the supreme embodiment of masculinity at the time.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 2:18 Studio of Isaac Oliver, *Henry Prince of Wales*, c. 1610, watercolour on vellum, NPG

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Milne, 'Two Portraits at Charlecote Park by William Larkin', *The Burlington Magazine*, 94 (1952), pp. 352-56.

<sup>48</sup> Sheila O'Connell, 'Larkin, William (c.1580–1619)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37657>, accessed 26 April 2017]; James Lees-Milne, , 'Two Portraits', p. 355.

<sup>49</sup> For discussion of Renaissance ideas of the 'face as an index of the mind' see: West, *Portraiture*, pp. 28-37; For discussion of idealised masculinity see Joanna Woodall, (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997) pp. 36-42.

<sup>50</sup> West, *Portraiture*, p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> James Lees-Milne, 'Two Portraits', p 356.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*

In 1610 Sir Thomas married Alice Spencer, daughter of the Lucys' neighbour, Thomas Spencer of Claverdon and the couple lived at Charlecote for the rest of their lives. So great was Dame Alice's reputation as a model of feminine piety that the puritan minister of Great Budworth in Chester, John Ley, dedicated his life of Jane Radcliffe to her alongside the pious Protestant Brilliana, Lady Harley.<sup>53</sup> Ley addressed the pair as 'two truly virtuous and religious ladies' claiming: 'I doubt not but (as elect Ladies) your names are registered together in the book of life'; important phrases in the idealising language which constructed Alice Lucy's reputation.<sup>54</sup>



Figure 2:19 English School, Four Children of Sir Thomas Lucy III and Alice Spencer (Robert, Richard, Constance and Margaret), 1619, Charlecote Park ©National Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty

There is uncertainty about the number of children born to Thomas and Alice Lucy, however, for the purpose of this thesis it has been calculated that they had sixteen, most whom survived to adulthood.<sup>55</sup> Four of them are depicted in the earliest portrait, of 1619,

<sup>53</sup> Cust, 'Lucy, Alice,' *ODNB* (2008).

<sup>54</sup> J. Ley, *A patterne of pietie*, (1640).

<sup>55</sup> The 1619 herald's visitation to Warwickshire coincided with the year of this commission and records the Lucys as having five children at that date, however, Mary Lucy claims there were six by then; whatever the reason only four of them were represented in the portrait; Various primary and secondary sources were consulted to identify family members including: Cust, 'Lucy, Sir Thomas'; Henry Lancaster and Paul Hunneyball, 'Lucy, Sir Thomas (1585-1640), of Charlecote, Warws.' (2010),



by an unknown artist which hangs in the rebuilt great hall at Charlecote Park (Fig. 2:19). Although possibly a later addition, the children's ages are inscribed on the canvas. The child on the right holding a rose is probably Margaret aged three, she holds her taller sister Constance, by the hand, who is five. The child holding the robin on the left of the portrait is one of the twins, either Bridget or Robert, who were two in 1619. The age of the baby, seated and wrapped in a scarlet blanket is one, and is probably therefore Richard, born in 1619. The Lucys had six surviving children by 1619 and the absence of the heir Spencer, aged three, from this group leads to speculation that there was a companion portrait which is now lost. If this is the case, it would seem more likely that the child holding the robin is Bridget and that this portrait depicts the three eldest girls and the baby Richard, while the lost companion portrait depicts the two eldest boys Spencer and Robert. There is no indication that 1619 was a particularly auspicious year for the family apart from Richard's birth, and the portrait may simply commemorate a moment of assurance and maturity, indicating a fruitful marriage, familial ease, unity and confidence in the future.

Within the next year or so, the Lucys commissioned more portraits and there are five others, all on canvas still at Charlecote Park. These include two pairs of pendant portraits of Sir Thomas and his wife; each pair is the same size, and has been ascribed the same date and are by unnamed artists.<sup>56</sup> Figs 2:20 and 2:21 are half-length while Figs 2:22 and 2:23 are three-quarter length and these portraits are likely to have originally hung in the traditional inward facing configuration of pendant portraits discussed above. There is

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[<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/lucy-sir-thomas-1585-1640>), Accessed May 2017]; John Fetherston (ed), *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the year 1619* (London, 1877); W. Harry Rylands, *The Visitation of the County of Warwick begun by Thomas May, Chester and Gregory King, Rouge-Dragon in Hilary Vacation 1682*, (London, 1911); Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys*, p. 125; Lucy, *Biography of the Lucy family*, p.135. PROB /11/185 Will of Sir Thomas Lucy; PROB/11/205 Will of Dame Alice Lucy.

<sup>56</sup> Pendant is the name given to one of two paintings conceived as a pair, they were often intended for a particular domestic setting - perhaps to hang either side of a fireplace or window', National Gallery glossary [<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/pendant>, Accessed May 2017].

an important shift in style between the linear, rigid poses and detailed attention to costume and lace of the children's portrait which is typical of native-born English artists, and the more naturalistic figures of their parents which show a more developed use of light and shade to depict their body shape and skin tone. This shift might suggest that the artists were aware of new continental styles while not fully realising them. While these four portraits demonstrate stylistic development, the couple's poses and expressions are nonetheless rigid, the palette limited and their gazes fixed. After this date Dame Alice is distinguished by her own repertoire of facial features and demeanour which could best be described as neutrality, passivity and serenity which like her husband's expression adds a sense of dignity and inner strength.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 2:20 English School, *Sir Thomas Lucy III*, c. 1620-25, oil on canvas, Charlecote Park  
©National Trust Images

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<sup>57</sup> West, *Portraiture*, p. 34.



Figure 2:21 English School, *Alice Lucy*, c. 1620-25, oil on canvas, Charlecote Park ©National Trust Images



Figure 2:22 English School, *Sir Thomas Lucy III*, c. 1620-25, oil on canvas, Charlecote Park ©National Trust Images



Figure 2:23 English School, *Alice Lucy*, c. 1620-25, oil on canvas, Charlecote Park ©National Trust Images



While the pendants suggest a level of equality between the couple in terms of scale and pose, their props draw attention to their differently gendered roles. Fig. 2:20 depicts Sir Thomas seated upright with a grave expression, soberly dressed in black with a plain turned down collar; appropriate attire and posture for a man who by this date was member of parliament for Warwickshire.<sup>58</sup> At the bottom of the faux oval mount which surrounds his figure is the most prominent prop in this, as in other of his portraits – a book, which he offers to the viewer with his left hand, the pages held open with his index finger. In Fig. 2:22 the book is still in his left hand and held open, but with his little finger, while another book, this time closed, rests on the table behind him alongside some spurs and a bit. The motif of open books suggest that Sir Thomas was an avid reader with a mind open to learning and an eagerness to share knowledge, important attributes for an educated, pious gentleman in public life. Books are props in all the portraits of Sir Thomas including the miniature library carved on his funeral monument which represents the works of classical authors (Fig. 2:24).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Lancaster and Hunneyball 'Lucy, Sir Thomas' and Cust, 'Lucy, Sir Thomas', *ODNB*, (2008); Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, (London: Batsford, 1986).

<sup>59</sup> See Richard Cust, 'The Public Man in Late Tudor and Early Stuart England', in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England*, ed. by P. Pincus and S. Lake (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 116-43.



Figure 2:24 Detail of 'the library' in the monument to Sir Thomas Lucy, St Leonard's Church, Charlecote

The two pendant portraits of Dame Alice (Figs 2:21 and 2:23) depict her as visibly pregnant, her right hand both resting on, and gesturing towards her belly. This important detail frames her identity as a model of motherhood, something which becomes a central element in her subsequent portraits. Karen Hearn has drawn attention to the genre of portraits dating from between the 1580s and 1630s, known as ‘pregnancy portraits’ when it was relatively common for sitters to be depicted in a visible state of pregnancy.<sup>60</sup> These sitters were often from ‘unequivocally’ protestant families, like the Lucys and Hearn suggests the choice of pose may have had a confessional motive associated with the belief among protestant writers that marriage and child-bearing were spiritually elevated states for women.<sup>61</sup> Alternatively she proposes, in this period the perceived dangers of childbirth might prompt the commissioning of a portrait of a pregnant wife in order to retain her

<sup>60</sup> Karen Hearn, ““Saved through Childbearing”: A Godly Context for Elizabethan Pregnancy Portraits’, in *Art Re-Formed Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 65-68.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

memory in the event of her death.<sup>62</sup> On the table beside her in Fig. 2:23 is an object which could be either a compass or a time piece attached to a key or winder by a blue ribbon. This object could either signify temperance or be a *memento mori* symbol perhaps connected to her pregnancy, both attributes would represent aspects of her character.<sup>63</sup>

The identification of Sir Thomas as the ideal patriarch and his wife as a model of feminine virtue are most fully realised in the large family group portrait which still hangs at Charlecote Park (Fig. 2:15), this is the only portrait which depicts parents and children together.<sup>64</sup> The now familiar facial features and demeanour of the couple are replicated here; Sir Thomas's pose recalling the patriarchal posture of the father in the woodcut illustration (Fig. 2:2). Here the central section of this group represents the couple with seven of their children and a nursemaid. The family's formal, though relaxed poses suggest confident superiority, while the nursemaid with her undirected gaze is more inhibited, indicating respect for her mistress and the rest of the family.<sup>65</sup> Cutting into this group on the left of the canvas is what appears to be a window through which the family's son and heir, Spencer (b. 1616) enters from a formal garden. As he steps into the room with the blue and white bowl of peaches his gaze is turned to the viewer.<sup>66</sup> The figure of the boy and the fruit simultaneously signify wealth, fashionable taste in garden design, a secure

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<sup>62</sup> Karen Hearn, 'A Fatal Fertility? Elizabethan and Jacobean Pregnancy Portraits', *Costume*, 34 (2000), pp. 39-43.

<sup>63</sup> Thanks to Dr Tara Hamling for help in identifying this object.

<sup>64</sup> This portrait has traditionally been attributed to Cornelius Johnson, an attribution which appears to have been first made by George Vertue who visited Charlecote in 1737 noting: 'By Corn. Johnson, small sketch of his family group (originally destroyed by fire), at Charlecote' These remarks suggest that the existing portrait may be a copy made from a sketch of an original. It is dated (by the National Trust) to c. 1622/3, although a date nearer 1628 seems much more likely. Hearn makes no mention of this work in her recent publication on Johnson and it is unlikely therefore that the portrait is by this artist which may either have been by an unknown artist or, as Vertue suggests, a copy of an original, probably not by Johnson.

<sup>65</sup> Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 86.

<sup>66</sup> Professor Roy Strong refers to the fruit as apples not peaches; however, his analysis is made on the 1740–1744 copy of the portrait in the Walker Art Gallery, not on the version in Charlecote Park; Roy Strong, *The artist and; the garden*, (London: Yale University Press, 2000) p. 38.

lineage and the rich fruit which this heir promises the family, all of which combine to represent his future role as natural and legitimate. A large classical pillar simultaneously acts as a framing device to divide the sections of the painting and signifies fortitude, a quality expected of father and son. Almost invisible on the dark pillar behind Sir Thomas is the inscription 'Deus mihi haec otia fecit' translated 'God hath given this tranquility/leisure', a paraphrase from Virgil, *Eclogue I*, l.6, substituting 'nobis' with 'mihi'.<sup>67</sup> This phrase sums up the idealising nature of the scene in which a tranquil family life is described as God given.

The figures in the interior space appear unaware of Spencer's presence as he enters the scene and he looks away from the rest of his family to engage the viewer, showing his liminal status which both moves inwards towards the family and looks outwards to his active role in the world. While Spencer seems detached from the main family, his parents, brothers and sisters form a united group, their bodies overlapping, bookended by their parents. Both Sir Thomas and Lady Alice are represented in the traditional pose discussed above, he on the viewers' left, she on the right, their bodies in three-quarter turns, the space between them filled with some of their children representing the fruitfulness of their marriage. The couple's fine black clothes suggest a balance between their desire to express gentle status through good quality clothing and their serious intent and religious commitment, which required sober colour and neatness as markers of sobriety and high moral tone.<sup>68</sup> Sir Thomas's balanced and upright pose and central place in the portrait, confirm his religious identity and ensure that it was as a mature, benevolent patriarch, his lineage and estate secure for future generations, that viewers would have seen him. The

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<sup>67</sup> National Trust images.

<sup>68</sup> Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England*, (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 160-161 and pp. 200-201; Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality*, p. 65.

role he performs would have been familiar to the portrait's audiences, combining the patron with the patriarch endowed with the qualities of moderation, justice and self-assurance required for his many public offices.

Dame Alice is portrayed as a nurturing mother, here not visibly pregnant, but surrounded by her children and attended by the elderly nursemaid, whose dark skin contrasts with her young mistress's, emphasising their difference in rank. Despite their fixed gazes, the couple interact with their children; Lady Alice's right hand for example, reaches out to receive cherries from a bowl offered by her eldest daughter Constance, perhaps indicating the sharing of feminine fruitfulness. The bowl, like that carried by Spencer is probably Chinese imported porcelain, expensive and fashionable items which suggest the quality of the family's domestic wares.<sup>69</sup> Their second daughter Margaret, Spencer's twin, seems to look for her father's attention as he holds her hand, while the child seated on the arm of his mother's chair rests his hand on hers, reflecting his respect for, and dependence on, his mother.<sup>70</sup> The couple are seated in upright chairs, emphasising the authority they have over their household, none of whom are afforded such dignity. Unlike the pendant portraits, there are no open books here, the closed books on the table behind Sir Thomas are arranged alongside spurs and a bit, signifiers of self-control and temperance and which combine the scholar with the sportsman.

His love of horses and prowess as a sportsman were important in establishing Sir Thomas's credentials as a man of the country. This love was evidently genuine as his will contains five separate legacies of horses, including to Spencer to whom he left 'the two

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<sup>69</sup>See:

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?limit=15&narrow=1&q=seventeenth+century+chinese+&commit=Search&after-adbc=AD&before-adbc=AD&collection%5B%5D=THES48594&offset=0&slug=0>

<sup>70</sup> Probably Robert b. 1617.

horses called the Hobby and that called Mingnon with two colts and two mares'.<sup>71</sup> His mounted figure is also conspicuous on his funeral monument, carved in relief to the left of his recumbent figure (Fig. 2:28). This little image shows Sir Thomas with apparent mastery of a stallion, perhaps a cavalry horse, whose front and hind legs appear to leave the ground in a dressage movement known as a capriole or 'croupade'.<sup>72</sup> By 1616 Sir Thomas held the prestigious office of captain of the horse in the county militia, a post which would have involved both demonstrating and supervising cavalry training manoeuvres by the county cavalry.<sup>73</sup>



Figure 2:25 Detail of the tomb of Sir Thomas and Lady Alice Lucy, St Leonard's Church, Charlecote

While books and references to horsemanship were important signifiers in the portraits of Sir Thomas, they are replaced in his wife's by gestures suggesting maternity and specific jewellery signifying her exemplary moral qualities. For example, the hand

<sup>71</sup> TNA, PROB /11/185, Will of Sir Thomas Lucy, 1641.

<sup>72</sup> A high leap made by a horse without advancing (Oxford English Dictionary 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. p. 870).

<sup>73</sup> Thanks to Professor Cust for this information.

which gestures towards her belly communicates the central importance of motherhood in her representations. As a godly woman, maternity absorbed her life and consumed her whole identity, becoming the central concern and expression of her piety. In her funeral sermon, the Lucys' household chaplain, Thomas Dugard, extolled Alice's fecundity: 'A very fruitful vine she was and many were her olive plants about her table. Some of them have seen death before her: ten she has left behind her.'<sup>74</sup> So integral to her pious persona was her role as a mother that Dugard idealized her as the epitome of the godly mother, claiming '... her children [as] her chief ornaments.'<sup>75</sup> Jennifer Heller discusses the stereotypes of motherhood which 'saturated' early modern images and imaginations; at one end, she writes, was the 'ideal' mother, at the other, the 'bad' mother.<sup>76</sup> Alice Lucy conforms precisely to the stereotypical ideal mother whose character should be 'discreet and sober' well read in divinity, history and poetry and above all concerned with the instruction of her children in piety and morality'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas Dugard, *Death and the Grave* (1649); Ann Hughes, 'Dugard, Thomas (*bap.* 1608, *d.* 1683)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66139>, accessed 26 April 2017].

<sup>75</sup> Dugard, *Death and the Grave*.

<sup>76</sup> Jennifer Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) p. 15.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 2:26 The figure of Dame Alice Lucy in the monument to Sir Thomas and Alice Lucy, St Leonard's Church, Charlecote



Figure 2:27 The figure of Dame Alice Lucy in the monument to Thomas and Alice Lucy, St Leonard's Church, Charlecote (detail showing handkerchief)



Special attention is paid in all the portraits of Alice to the quality of her jewellery, especially to the large pearls around her neck and hanging from her ears on black ribbons the lustre of the pearls echoing the delicate lustre of the skin on which they are displayed. An association, suggests Karen Raber, which draws attention to the close relationship between the beauty of the pearls, femininity, purity and their wearer.<sup>78</sup> As in many elite families, the display of pearls was a significant reminder of the importance of female virtue in defining family honour and was evidently a quality with which Alice wished to endow her daughters and daughter-in-law, since she bequeathed them two different pearl necklaces and a pair of pearl earrings in her will.<sup>79</sup> In death as in life Alice was represented with her pearl necklace and pendant earrings, a reminder of their important role in her self-fashioning and suggesting her continuing obedience and faithfulness to her husband after death.

Thomas Dugard's eulogy probably contributed as much as the painted portraits to the accounts of Alice Lucy as a paragon of wifely and maternal virtue and godliness, drawing together the visual and oral tropes which constructed her as 'ideal'. He lauds her virtues as a wife as 'modesty', 'self-denial', 'reverent amiability', and 'admirable prudence and faithfulness'.<sup>80</sup> He confirms that as a widow her role remained wifely, claiming: 'When he [God] had made her a widow, he made himself her husband, supporting her, protecting her, comforting her, and enabling her to manage her great estate and to order her numerous family with such a measure of prudence as was admirable'<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Karen Raber, 'Chains of Pearls: Gender, Property, Identity', in *Ornamentation: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*, ed. by Bella Mirabella (Michigan, USA: The University of Michigan Press, 2011), pp. 159-81

<sup>79</sup> TNA, PROB/11/205, Will of Dame Alice Lucy, 1648.

<sup>80</sup> Dugard, *Death and the Grave*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

Dame Alice commissioned arguably the most striking of the Lucy portraits, the splendid sculpted monument which was located on the south aisle of Charlecote Church.<sup>82</sup> (Fig. 2:28). This was the culmination of the couple's programme of patronage and reinforced many of the details discussed above which defined them as 'ideal'. The expensive marble and fine quality of its carving with its classical architectural style, speak eloquently about the status of its subjects while its scale and enormous coat of arms provided a strong visual reminder of the antiquity and permanence of the Lucys' lineage, their dominance and entitlement to land.<sup>83</sup>



Figure 2:28 Nicholas Stone workshop (part by John Schorman), Monument to Sir Thomas Lucy, black and white marble, St Leonard's Church, Charlecote

<sup>82</sup> Sir William Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire*, (1656), p. 402.

<sup>83</sup> Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments*, p. 165. See Richard Cust, 'William Dugdale and the Honour Politics of Stuart Warwickshire', in *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-1685*, ed. by Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 89-108.

The image of Sir Thomas Lucy as the ideal patriarch surrounded by his family is reinforced in the words of the Puritan minister, Robert Harris, whose funeral eulogy restated his familial and household virtues claiming:

A noble lady hath lost not an husband (as she saith) but a father.  
Many children have lost not a father but a counsellor.  
An houseful of servants have lost not a master but a physician who made  
(as I am informed) their sickness his, and his physic and cost theirs.  
Townes full of tenants have lost a landlord that could both protect and  
Direct them in their own way.  
The whole neighbourhood have lost a light.  
The countrie a leader.  
Countrey a patriot ... <sup>84</sup>

Here, Sir Thomas's virtues as a patriarch are specifically linked to his apparently benign control of his estate, thence to his duties as a public man and patriot - outwards from the family to the estate and thence to the country. Sir Thomas's image as a man of honour active in public life is reinforced by the monument where he is depicted as alert, raised on his elbow and dressed in armour with his hand on his sword. The couple are displayed in death, as in their life-time portraits through rank and gender. Dame Alice lies in a passive position, her eyes raised to heaven with her hand arched over her belly, signifying her maternal duties, and she holds a handkerchief, perhaps a love token but also a symbol of her widow's grief. While her pearls, worn even in death, celebrate her wealth, status and continued chaste state.

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<sup>84</sup> Robert Harris, *Abner's Funerall* (1641), pp. 25-6.

## Case Study 2: The Burdett Family



Figure 2:29 English School, *Sir Thomas Burdett, 1st Bt and family*, c. 1620, oil on canvas, present location unknown

Just as the acceptance of correctly gendered roles within marriage was an attribute of the ‘ideal’ gentry family, so was the desire for families to present a united front to the world. As Linda Pollock notes: ‘The most important factor influencing the upbringing of children in these [elite] ranks was the desire to establish and maintain at least the illusion of a unified, cohesive and harmonious family group.’<sup>85</sup> Unity, according to many writers of conduct books and sermons, was something which grew out of marriages which were

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<sup>85</sup> Linda Pollock, “‘Teach Her to Live under Obedience’: The Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England”, *Continuity and Change*, 4 (1989), p. 252.

built on mutuality, which William Gouge believed was concerned with more than reciprocal liking but based on an acceptance of shared duties and obligations between husbands and wives, parents and children, servants and masters.<sup>86</sup> Good household order and, by extension, social order was seen to depend on the apparent contradiction of a wife's subordination and an effective partnership between husband and wife.<sup>87</sup> The portrait which is the subject of this case study is of the Burdett family of Foremark Hall, Derbyshire, of c.1620 which foregrounds unity and mutuality as central concerns. Unfortunately since its present location is unknown, at the date of writing the only available copy is a black and white print in the NPG's Heinz Archive (Fig. 2:29).<sup>88</sup> While this is somewhat limiting, there are compelling reasons why this portrait has been selected for study since it is an intriguing work, a detailed reading of which reveals complex patterns of mirroring and repetition which articulate its meaning. Unity was vital for gentry families, for whom the maintenance of property and the management of wealth were economic necessities, relationship breakdowns threatened their survival, leading to the division of land and financial ruin.<sup>89</sup>

This study will contribute to the growing body of research about the Burdett family who played a central role in the cultural geography of the early-modern Midlands.<sup>90</sup> It also draws attention to contradictions between portraiture and textual sources, because here,

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<sup>86</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*.

<sup>87</sup> Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination*, p. 173.

<sup>88</sup> NPG neg 7437; Dated by Vivienne Larminie, 'Burdett, Jane, Lady Burdett (d. 1637)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/67232>, accessed 26 April 2017]; Thanks to Francis Ebury, the Earl of Wilton, his cousin, Lord Wilton's widow, and Mr. Robin Boyes for their efforts in tracing the portrait.

<sup>89</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>90</sup> Larminie, 'Burdett, Jane, Lady Burdett'; Mary E. Polito, "'This Rare Poetesse': The Remains of Lady Jane Burdett', *Early Theatre*, 14. (2011), pp. 203-24; Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge) especially Chapter Three, pp. 101-132; Margaret Jane Kidnie, 'Near Neighbours: Another Early Seventeenth Century Manuscript of *the Humorous Magistrate*', *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 13 (2007), pp. 187-211.

Lady Jane Burdett is depicted as a woman whose identity is shaped by her function as a wife and mother, whereas archival sources show her to have had exceptional literary talent beyond the family operating in the public arena at the heart of a lively literary and social circle.<sup>91</sup>

By the late sixteenth century the Burdetts ranked as senior gentry, holding land in Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire, though their principal manor and main sphere of influence was in the north Warwickshire parish of Bramcote and the nearby villages. Ann Hughes ranks them with the Lucys of Charlecote and the Burgoynes of Wroxall as members of ‘the greater gentry’ and certainly their influence through their social and marital links covered a large part of the east Midlands.<sup>92</sup> It is probable that Thomas was still a minor when he married Jane Francis, the niece and sole heir of his father’s friend John Francis, a childless widower of great fortune who died in 1602.<sup>93</sup> John Francis names ‘my welbeloved Robert Burdett of Bramcote in the county of Warwick’ as one of the overseers of his will, raising the possibility that the marriage was an arrangement made between friends designed to save the Burdett family’s finances, a strategy which evidently succeeded.<sup>94</sup> The young couple inherited Foremark Hall from John Francis immediately after their marriage and this estate subsequently became their chief manor, although they continued to retain and occupy Bramcote Hall. This vital inheritance restored the family’s fortunes and status through the social and geographic range of their familial connections as well as through Jane’s energy and intelligence.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-60* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 40-41.

<sup>93</sup> TNA, PROB 11/103/242, Will of John Fraunce of Foremark, Derbyshire; Larminie, ‘Burdett, Jane’.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the absence of the original painting, handwritten information on the reverse of the print is useful, providing its scale, which at two hundred and twenty six centimetres by two hundred and eight centimetres was almost life-sized suggesting that it was likely to have been painted in oil on canvas and hung in one of the main reception rooms. Judging by the cropping of the elbow and hat on the left side and the cloak on the right, it appears to have been cut down at some stage. The large scale indicates that this ambitious portrait celebrated great confidence in the future of this family. The date of 1620 suggests that it was commissioned to honour the creation of Sir Thomas as the first of the Burdett baronets in 1619, an event with important dynastic implications for which the commissioning of a large family group portrait was particularly appropriate, with its potential for making this achievement both permanent and visible.<sup>95</sup>

The portrait descended through the family until 1953 when it was sold by Sotheby & Co. as Lot sixty three to Lord Wilton for £360.<sup>96</sup> The sale catalogue offers further valuable information about the portrait and includes handwritten notes about colour and other details. The portrait depicts Sir Thomas and Lady Jane Burdett with their six children, posed in a formal group in front of a tester bed whose dark recess casts the figures into pale relief. The top and sides of the bed both frames and unites the group, signifying the continuity of family life and drawing attention to important domestic landmarks through its function as the marital bed and place of birth and death.<sup>97</sup> The sale catalogue notes that the bed is inscribed with the ages of the sitters, details which may have been added to the portrait at a later date but which are unfortunately not visible in the

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<sup>95</sup> Larminie, 'Burdett, Jane, Lady Burdett'.

<sup>96</sup> Sotheby & Co, Catalogue of English Historical and Family Portraits and Other Pictures, the Property of the Late Sir Francis Burdett 7<sup>th</sup> Bt [Sold by Order of the Trustees], Day of Sale Wednesday December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1953, no pagination.

<sup>97</sup> Thanks to Dr Elizabeth Sharrett for information about the parts of the bed.

print; however the children's approximate ages can be estimated from other sources and will be discussed below.<sup>98</sup>

Stylistically this work is close to the portrait of the four Lucy children of approximately the same date (Fig. 2:19). Its central foci are the somewhat wooden figures, with mask-like faces, of Jane and Thomas seated together in the centre of the painting. The usual convention of placing the wife on the left hand of her husband is reversed here, but Sir Thomas's role as patriarch is signalled by his height, although, unusually, her lighter costume, wider frame and expansive arm gesture make her the more dominant figure. Although an attempt has been made to animate the group and depict individuality, these are not lifelike representations, suggesting that the artist was more interested in representing their qualities and status than the reality of their appearance. It might also indicate a low level of skill by the artist and draws attention to the fact that it was common at this date for artists to pay more attention to the costumes than to physical likeness which was often achieved only through a single sitting or from memory.<sup>99</sup>

Jane has her left hand on top of her husband's upturned palm, apparently bearing down with her left arm, and while their fingers are not interlinked, their thumbs overlap. Their hands are slightly below and to the right of the horizontal and vertical mid lines, a crucial position which draws the viewer's attention to the centrality of their marriage and promotes the idea of its strength and mutuality.<sup>100</sup> The joining of hands was an important symbolic moment in the Elizabethan prayer book's service of marriage of 1559 coming

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<sup>98</sup> Sotheby & Co, Catalogue of English Historical and Family Portraits and Other Pictures, the Property of the Late Sir Francis Burdett.

<sup>99</sup> For discussion of the one-dimensional quality of early modern portraiture see Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 2 'English Portraiture in Context' pp. 17-39.

<sup>100</sup> Anthony Fletcher, "The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England." In *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain*, edited by Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.173-174. Pollock, 'Teach Her to Live under Obedience'.



before the exchange of rings. First the man took the woman by her right hand and then the woman took the man by his right, the moment which is recalled in this gesture.<sup>101</sup>

It is not entirely clear from the print, but the couple appear to be seated on a bench or single large chair. Every member of the group is expressionless except the girl on the left who has a lively face and half smiles. Each family member has eye contact with the viewer, in a collective gaze which suggests a unified view point, even a commonality of purpose or single-mindedness. In the eighteen years between their marriage and the commissioning of the portrait Jane and Thomas had six surviving children who are all depicted here. They are, standing on the viewers' left, Bridget aged about fifteen and her eldest brother Francis aged twelve (born 1608) and seated below him is Jane, aged about seven.<sup>102</sup> Standing on the viewers' right is Dorothy aged about thirteen and her brother Robert aged about eleven, and standing below him is the youngest child Mary aged four or five whose right hand rests on her father's lap (she may be holding something between her finger and thumb which is not visible from the print).

The orderly and symmetrical grouping of the figures, with the oldest brother and sister and the older of the youngest children on the viewers' left, mirrored by their younger siblings on the viewers' right and there is little in this portrait to suggest individualism or rebelliousness which emphasises their common mind and above all, their united front. The mirroring is emphasised by the fact that the vertical midline runs directly through the linked shoulders of Thomas and Jane with an almost mathematical precision and although the canvas may have been cut down, it seems to have been done so equally on both sides.

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<sup>101</sup> Edward Benham, ed., *The Prayer-Book of Queen Elizabeth 1559* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909), p. 123.

<sup>102</sup> Frederick Arthur Crisp (ed.), 'Pedigree of Burdett of Foremark of Co. Derby, Baronets', in *Visitation of England and Wales*, by (Institute of Historical Research: Privately published, 1913), pp. 129-34.

The Burdetts moved in wealthy, well-educated and fashionable circles, whose members could be expected to have frequent access to London markets, a fact reflected in the quality of their clothing. Jane's wealth and status is indicated by her elaborate costume, the detail of its apparently fine embroidery is sadly lost in the reproduction. Her hair is severely scraped back and her face stands out starkly against the dark inside of her headdress which is trimmed with white bobbin lace. Her turned down, intricately goffered ruff is trimmed, like the headdress and cuffs, with bobbin lace.<sup>103</sup> Jane's costume is consistent with fashionable styles of about 1620 and indicates a considerable investment of both time and money in her appearance. Her jewellery however is relatively simple, consisting of just three or four loops of pearls on both wrists and a thumb ring on her right hand.

The gowns of the four daughters are scaled down versions of their mother's, emphasising again family continuity, unity and collective identity. Bridget's status as the oldest child is suggested by her height and by the fact that her left arm rests on the back of her mother's chair in a confident gesture which indicates familiarity and possibly affection. All four of the girls are bare headed and wear their hair loose showing that at this date they were all unmarried. Tantalizingly the Sotheby's sale catalogue has been annotated in pencil with the words: 'he is in black. Ladies dresses wh[ite] and pale grey embroidered with red green & ...'<sup>104</sup> unfortunately this is the nearest it has been possible to come to reconstructing the colours of the costumes but suggests a unified colour palette.<sup>105</sup>

The obvious mirroring emphasises a group affinity which is confirmed by the swaggering poses and costumes of the couple's two sons, Francis, the eldest, on the

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<sup>103</sup> Goffering is a process crimping or fluting lace; Santina M. Levey, *Lace : A History*, (Routledge, 1983).

<sup>104</sup> Illegible.

<sup>105</sup> Sotheby & Co, Catalogue of English Historical and Family Portraits and Other Pictures, the Property of the Late Sir Francis Burdett.

viewers' left, and Robert on the right of the frame. The boys are dressed similarly though not identically, in fashionable and elegantly embroidered high-waisted doublets which come to a point below their waists. Both wear capes over their left shoulders, Francis's falls back from his left wrist to reveal a delicate lace-trimmed cuff, another is clearly seen on his right wrist as well, and both boys wear slightly fuller hose than their father's which reach above their knees. The brothers present their elegant legs to the viewer which, like their father's, become important sites for rich and elaborate display; they are clad in white stockings embellished with fine lace garters decorated with elaborate bows. The stockings lead the eye to their delicate white pointed shoes which are decorated with ribbon roses which echo the white pointed toes of their mother and sisters. The boys' expensive and fashionable costumes express status and wealth.

Both boys wear their hair short, Francis's is dark while his brother's is blonde, one of the few indicators of individuality. They carry large and prominent hats which they hold at their waists, Robert's has a band and appears lighter in colour than his brother's. While the carrying of hats sometimes indicates the heir apparent, in this case, since both boys carry them, may suggest a level of equality between them, or may simply signify their masculinity. Masculinity is certainly suggested by their poses; Francis stands in the familiar posture of confident masculinity with the so called 'Renaissance Elbow' - his right hand near his hip, his elbow crooked and his right leg thrust forward.<sup>106</sup> Robert's pose is a little less dynamic because, while his right elbow is bent, his hand indicates the direction of his heart, something which might suggest loyalty or affection. The apparent bookending of the Burdett family between the boys in this conventional posture suggests their masculine role within the family, uniting the group and signifying a doubly secure future.

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<sup>106</sup> Joaneath Spicer, 'The Renaissance Elbow', in *A Cultural History of Gesture* ed. by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 84-112.

The significance of the posture and demeanour of the boys is emphasised by their parents' hand and arm gestures. Jane's right hand reaches to touch the left shoulder of her oldest son and heir Francis, while Thomas lays his left hand onto the crooked arm of their second son Robert; gestures which produce a chain of hands and arms, passing between the boys through the conjoined hands of their parents. This linking of hands and arms symbolises the central duty of elite marriages in this period to perpetuate the family line through the production of male heirs, a task which apparently united this couple and again, emphasises unity and mutuality.

The posture of the two boys is echoed by that of the two older sisters, Bridget and Dorothy. Bridget on the viewer's left delicately holds a fine gold or silver chain which runs through Francis's left hand, down to Jane's right hand, across her own and her mother's skirt, over her father's leg, to be held in Mary's left hand, up through Robert's right hand and returned to the second oldest daughter, Dorothy's left hand. The two oldest girls therefore encircle and enclose the whole family with a single fine chain suggesting their part in binding the family together, each individual member representing a link on the chain, signifying the part the girls were expected to play in maintaining an unbreakable line of family unity with ties of mutual obligation. This chain is a unique detail not found in any of the other portraits considered here. The two youngest sisters, Jane (viewers' left) and Mary, like their older sisters are mirrored, both hold grey or silver doves; Jane's rests on her left knee while Mary's is held in the crook of her arm with the chain passing across its breast. The dove is widely depicted in the Bible as a signifier of peace and gentleness, probably the qualities they represent in the portrait.

## **Chapter Two: conclusion**

By paying attention to details of composition, costume and props and supporting the portraits with textual sources, it is argued here that the extensive programme of patronage by the Lucy family, depicted them as models of the ideal patriarchal gentry family. The second case study in contrast, demonstrates how the Burdett family controlled their image with care and precision, using repeated patterns and mirroring as visual devices to reflect their orderly, secure and above all united domestic life, set within a marriage based on mutuality. Chapter Three looks beyond the nuclear family unit to examine portraits of other kinds of family arrangements, especially focussing on portraits of step and grandparents.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BEYOND THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

While the nuclear unit was the most common form of family arrangement in the early modern period, many people experienced domestic life in more complex households, living with step or half siblings and parents or other members of their kinship network.<sup>1</sup> Indeed there was a great diversity of family types and many people lived in more than one family during their life time.<sup>2</sup> This diversity is reflected in the discussion which follows and informs the choice of case studies in this chapter which focus on portraits of step-families and grandparents with grandchildren. These case studies cover a wide chronological range from the early years of the seventeenth century to its closing decades and demonstrate a transition in style from the work of an unnamed, provincial artist to the expressive, flowing style of the well-known artist John Michael Wright. These portraits argue for the active role of portraits in demonstrating investment in estates and confidence in the future of families.

#### a. Step-families

High maternal mortality meant that re-marriage and step-parenting were relatively common, although the role of step-parent was often regarded with suspicion and sometimes seen as a threat to family unity and stability. In letters to her sister, the wealthy Anne Dormer for example, described her father's former mistress, later her step-mother, as 'the serpent' who had invaded their family's Garden of Eden.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to this characterisation, two portraits

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984), pp.202-227.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Sara Mendelson, 'Anne Dormer and Her Children', in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Farnham, Surrey and Vermont, USA: Ashgate, 2011), p.118; Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 202-227.

of Hester Tradescant with her step-children John and Frances (Figs 3:1 and 3:2) represent their family as harmonious, echoing many of the now familiar tropes evident in portraits of nuclear families.<sup>4</sup> The children's mother Jane died in 1635 and three years later their father John Tradescant the younger, married Hester Pookes.<sup>5</sup> The normal conventions in portraits of lone mothers have been adopted here, with Hester posed in the first portrait in the traditional wife's place to the right of the frame, her body turned and, with her hand on her step-son's shoulder, she has assumed the natural mother's role, indicating the heir and apparently respecting her husband in his absence. Her step-daughter Frances turns her head towards Hester in a gesture which suggests that she is the source of maternal support or advice. In the second portrait, John offers his step-mother a painting of a plant in a gesture which suggests confidence, even affection between them and may also draw attention to his father's public role as horticulturalist in the court of Charles I.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217; See Patricia Crawford, 'The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* ed. by Valerie Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 13 for fear of step mothers; for biographical details sitters, see: Arthur MacGregor, 'Tradescant, John, the younger (bap. 1608, d. 1662)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27655>, accessed 17 May 2017]

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 3:1 British Artist, *Hester Tradescant and her Stepchildren, John and Frances*, 1644, oil on canvas, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



Figure 3:2 Thomas de Critz (attr), *Hester Tradescant and her step-son John*, 1645, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford



Step-children and second wives are occasionally depicted in other group portraits and the complex relationships of step-parenting revealed in the Saltonstall family group are discussed in detail in Chapter Six. The sitters in the portrait of Sir Robert Vyner and his family for example (Fig. 1:7) are Sir Robert and his wife Mary, the widow of Sir Thomas Hyde, her daughter Bridget Hyde and Charles Vyner, the only son of this marriage.<sup>6</sup> The family is shown in the garden of their house, Swakeleys, in Middlesex. The flowers which Bridget holds in her skirt and offer her step-brother suggest the bounty and beauty she brings to the family; yet her position on the edge of the group seems fragile. In contrast, the position of her own, and her mother's arm directs attention to her step-brother, the family heir, who appears to be protectively surrounded by his parents and is the focus of the portrait.<sup>7</sup>

## **b. Grandparents**

### **Introduction**

The role of grandparents in early modern families is a surprisingly under researched area of study since many people lived long enough to see their grandchildren and played a significant role in their lives.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the secondary literature is largely silent on the subject, primary sources offer a rich range of evidence including diaries, legacy and conduct literature, letters and wills in which references to grandchildren and grandparents are frequent and

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<sup>6</sup> National Portrait Gallery, *John Michael Wright, The Family of Sir Robert Vyner*, 1673, [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw08291/The-Family-of-Sir-Robert-Vyner>] (2017) Accessed May 2017].

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> While Crawford, Berry and Foyster have made interesting comments on the place of grandparents in the households of early-modern England, the subject has not been a central concern in theirs, or any other major publication: Patricia Crawford, , *Blood, Bodies and Families : In Early Modern England* (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2004) and Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Thanks to Karin Browne of the Shakespeare Institute Library for her help in attempting to source literature on this subject; Elizabeth Foyster, 'Parenting Was for Life, Not Just for Childhood: The Role of Parents in the Married Lives of Their Children in Early Modern England', *History* 86 (July 2001), pp. 313-27.

demonstrate the centrality of this relationship. Portraits therefore, offer an important new source of evidence on the subject.

Representations of grandparents and grandchildren had an important part to play in memorializing family virtue and legitimizing entitlement to power through time, as well as offering expressions of optimism for the future and suggesting dynastic foundations. It is claimed here that while affection might have played a part in commissioning portraits of grandchildren, they also have much in common with the genre of writing known as ‘the mother’s legacy’ and the corresponding genre of advice literature between fathers/grandfathers and sons.<sup>9</sup> This genre had an ideological dimension through which mothers might maintain their authority within their families after death, articulate their faith, guide and comfort the living and simultaneously secure their families’ social status.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that the fifth commandment to honour father and mother was normally taken seriously and it was common for families to feel an obligation towards the care of older family members.<sup>11</sup> While this was obviously shaped by material circumstances, among the gentry it was usual for widowed parents, particularly mothers, to continue to live with or near their married children where they might play an important part in the lives of their grandchildren, as was the case with the Harleys, Pytts and Crewes.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Heller, *The Mother’s Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); for example, Sir Matthew Hale, ‘Sir Matthew Hale’s Advice to His Grand-Children’, in *Practical Wisdom*, ed. by Arthur L. Humphreys (London: 1680), pp. 229-63.

<sup>10</sup> Heller, *The Mother’s Legacy*.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee’. The Bible Exodus 20:12, King James Version.

<sup>12</sup> Brilliana Harley, “Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley.” *Camden Old Series*, vol. 58, 1854, pp. 1–209., doi:10.1017/S2042169900013286; Mrs Baldwyn-Childe, *The Kyre Park Charters ...* . ed. by with the assistance of Mrs. Baldwyn-Childe The Worcestershire Historical Society, *Publications of the Worcestershire Historical Society* (Oxford: James Parker and Co, 1905).

Expressions of affection litter correspondence with grandchildren, for example when Elizabeth Richardson presented her grandson, Sir Edward Dering with a copy of her 1645 collection of prayers *A Ladies Legacie*, she greeted him as her ‘love-worth, & first Grand-Child’ signing herself ‘most affectionate Grandmother’.<sup>13</sup> Describing the affection which her father-in-law Thomas Harley felt for his grandson, Lady Brilliana Harley noted [he] ‘will not yield that any should be loved like him, he must be the finest boy in his eyes’.<sup>14</sup> Lady Mary Cholmondeley evidently longed to see her grandson Dick at Christmas in 1624, writing to his father: ‘Sir, I pray you give leave to my son Dick Grasvenor (sic) to come to morrow & to be with me, the rest of this time of Christmas to make merry with his uncles and friends that are now with me. I pray you send him to me for I look for him and am not well without him ...’<sup>15</sup>

Affection may have developed especially when grandparents assumed care of their grandchildren as occasionally happened. Margaret Gerard and her husband Piers for example, had seven children of their own before raising their orphaned grandchildren Peter, Elizabeth, Thomas and Edward. (Fig.3:3) shows Margaret Gerard at the age of ninety with her great-granddaughter Ann, daughter of her grandson Peter, in a portrait which linked generations over a considerable time span.<sup>16</sup> In other cases grandparents appear to have had the care of their grandchildren for short but regular periods, Ralph Josselin for example, notes in his diary that his grandchild stayed with his wife and himself for two months when it was nine months

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<sup>13</sup> Heller, *The Mother’s Legacy*, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads : The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> John T. Hopkins, “‘Such a Twin Likeness There Was in the Pair’: An Investigation into the Painting of the Cholmondeley Sisters”, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 141 (1991), p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> The Lady Newton, *The House of Lyme from Its Foundation to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917).

old and evidently it was common in the Josselin household for daughters to return to their parents' home to deliver their first child.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 3:3 British School, Margaret Gerard, widow of Sir Piers Legh holding her great-granddaughter Anne Legh, 1596, oil on board, private collection

Grandparents commonly expressed affection and continuing care for their grandchildren after death through bequests in their wills. Lady Alice Lucy for example, left land from her father's estate to her three granddaughters Constance, Alice and Arabella Spencer, towards their 'maintenance and raising'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly Sir Edward Pytts made

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<sup>17</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin*, pp. 114-116.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, PROB/11/205, Will of Dame Alice Lucy, 1648.

provision for his grandson Edward ‘towards his maintenance and education in learning’ as well as all the books in his extensive library.<sup>19</sup> Bequests of books were also left to his grandsons by Ralph Josselin to whichever of them ‘shall first devote to the Ministry’.<sup>20</sup>

Grandparents also left legacies in the form of advice to their grandchildren, offering opinions on all sorts of moral and practical matters. Sir Matthew Hale for example urged his granddaughters to read their Scripture, learn needlework, spinning, dairying and housekeeping.<sup>21</sup> Lady Grace Mildmay was particularly concerned for the spiritual welfare of her daughter and grandchildren, leaving them ‘the whole book of my meditations’ so that she could continue ‘familiar talk and communication with them’ after her death.<sup>22</sup> Grandparents appear to have been particularly willing to support their adult children and grandchildren with emotional and practical support in times of crisis, Ralph Josselin’s wife for example was willing to help his daughters when the grandchildren were sick.<sup>23</sup>

Portraits of grandparents with their grandchildren are a category of evidence from which some general themes emerge. Some may have been produced for doctrinal or propaganda purposes, especially those defending a faith position such as the Brudenell/Markham portrait which contains imagery reflecting their Catholic faith including a crucifix, here the figure of the grandmother appears to sanction or protect the faith of her descendants (Chapter Five Case study 3). The presence of grandparents in portraits such as the Woodsome Panels (Fig. 4:2),

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<sup>19</sup> TNA, PROB/11/13, Will of Sir Edward Pytts, 1617.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman : An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1970) p. 213.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Matthew Hale, ‘Sir Matthew Hale’s Advice to His Grand-Children’, in *Practical Wisdom*, ed. by Arthur L. Humphreys (London: 1680).

<sup>22</sup> Randall Martin, ‘The Autobiography of Grace, Lady Mildmay’, *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 18 (1994), p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> Macfarlane, *The Family Life*, p. 115.

combines mimetic portraits with heraldic display to suggest an unbroken line of inherited worth to inspire future generations, designed as Laurence Humphrey observed of arms, that children should ‘gaze on the images & titles of their ancestors: and not only read their virtues, but learn to counterfeit them.’<sup>24</sup> John Michael Wright’s portrait of *Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren* was used to defend a legal case (see Chapter Five).

While sentiment is rarely evident in portraits of the earlier dates, the two Bagot portraits of grandmothers with their grandchildren from the last quarter of the seventeenth century (Figs 3:6 and 3:8) demonstrate an apparently more relaxed style. Here, the natural, even sentimental attitudes of the children and their grandmothers, where the children either lean or sit on their grandmother’s knee and accept her arms around them, suggests familiarity, trust and affection, something absent from portraits of grandfathers and grandsons. While these two portraits have already been studied by art historians, the greater emphasis here on combining them with documentary sources offers an original approach.

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<sup>24</sup> Laurence Humphrey, *The nobles or of nobilitye*. 1563, Riir.

### Case study 1: Sir Edward Pytts and his Grandson Edward



Figure 3:4 English School, *Sir Edward Pytts and his grandson, Edward*, 1612, oil on panel, private collection

Discussion now moves to consider three case studies of portraits of grandparents; the first is the portrait of Sir Edward Pytts and his grandson, Edward, of 1612 followed by two portraits of the Bagot family of 1675/6. A formal art-historical approach to these portraits will

stress their form, composition, props and materiality, details which, it will be argued are central to their meaning.

The striking portrait of Sir Edward Pytts and his grandson Edward represents an exemplar of patriarchal authority and should be seen as a dynastic portrait, which like the Burdett group uses mirroring, in this case, to emphasise the sense of the child as a copy of his grandfather (Fig. 3:4).<sup>25</sup> It is inscribed and dated on the upper left side ‘AETATIS SUAE, 71, AUGUSTI, 10,/:1612’ and on the centre left: ‘6 FEBRUARI, 22,/:1612’, the inscriptions seem not to have been later additions and therefore date the portrait to 1612, and the ages of the sitters as seventy one and six respectively.<sup>26</sup> This date makes it likely that the reason for this commission was Sir Edward Pytts’ appointment as Sheriff of Worcestershire in 1611-1612, a position which followed his selection as Justice of the Peace in 1582 and a knighthood conferred in 1603.<sup>27</sup> The later honours followed his appointment as filazer for London, Middlesex, Huntingdonshire and Kent, in 1563 at the young age of twenty three.<sup>28</sup> This post involved issuing writs and other legal papers to the Court of Common Pleas on behalf of those who lived outside London; it transformed the family’s economic and social fortunes. Despite their rapid rise, documentary sources show that the Pytts were originally farmers and yeomen, tenants of the Mortimers on the remote western edge of Worcestershire.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> This case study develops Case Study Three in: Rosemary I. Keep, *Framing the Family : Early Modern Family Portraits and the Battle for Status*, Dissertation (M.A.) (University of Birmingham, Shakespeare Institute, 2012); Christie’s sale catalogue 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 Sale 7278 Lot 3; *Amphlett, The Kyre Park Charters Baldwyn-Childe*; ‘The Building of the Manor-House of Kyre Park’, *The Antiquary*, 22 (1890), pp. 50-53, *The Antiquary*, 21 (1890), pp. 202-05; *The Antiquary*, ‘The Building of the Manor-House of Kyre Park, Worcestershire. (1588-1618)’, *The Antiquary*, 21 (1890), pp. 261-64; Will of Sir Edward Pytts snr., 1617, TNA, PROB/11/131.

<sup>26</sup> Neither the Weiss Gallery or the Christie’s sale catalogue 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 Sale 7278 Lot 3, suggest that the inscription was inserted at a later date.

<sup>27</sup> *Amphlett, The Kyre Park Charters*, ix.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* ix.

<sup>29</sup> *Amphlett, The Kyre Park Charters* vi – ix.



This portrait is relatively late to be mounted on board since canvas was already becoming common for aristocratic portraits by 1612 and was increasingly popular among the gentry.<sup>30</sup> Despite the cropping, the weight of this one must have been considerable since it was painted on ‘unusually thick-hewn English oak panels’ and was almost life-sized.<sup>31</sup> English oak was generally of inferior quality to the more expensive Baltic oak and more readily available in London than the provinces, nevertheless, well-primed and seasoned oak allowed for the depiction of fine detail such as the lace on collars and the detail of the boy’s costume.<sup>32</sup>

The scale and standing postures of the figures embody conventional masculinity and self-control, an effect exaggerated by the cropping of the figures against the edges. Edward Pytts’ connections with London legal circles suggests that he may well have understood how the scale and postures elevated the status of the portrait’s subjects and articulated the patriarchal principle upon which aristocratic families were constructed.<sup>33</sup>

Scale and composition create a single elite identity for the pair, who stand beside one another, facing forward, their gaze meeting the viewer’s, their figures entirely filling the frame and contrasting with the scumbled, rust coloured background.<sup>34</sup> They are situated in a neutral space with no furniture or other objects to locate them in either a studio or domestic setting,

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<sup>30</sup> The portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh and his son for example is mounted on canvas; English School. *Sir Walter Raleigh and his Son*, 1602, oil on canvas, NPG; for discussion of the transition from board to canvas see Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 87-90.

<sup>31</sup> Weiss, *The Weiss Gallery 25 Years*.

<sup>32</sup> Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics*, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> Joanna Woodall, *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Scumble is the use of thinly applied transparent colours over a layer of darker paint: Ralph Mayer, *The Artist’s Handbook of Materials and Techniques* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 248. It is possible that the background was originally another colour, for example, the unstable blue of smalt which sometimes degraded to a brownish colour. See Rica Jones, ‘The Methods and Materials of Three Tudor Artists: Bettes, Hilliard and Ketel’, in *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630*, ed. by Karen Hearn (Tate Publishing, 1995), pp. 233.

apart from a skirting which places them in an interior. The pair are lit weakly from the left, resulting in a slight shadow cast on the wall behind them; they become the whole focus of the work. Careful and delicate brush strokes signify their importance, and distinguish them from the looser brush work of their surroundings. The boy's short red hair is almost lost against the rusty background.

Although the foreground is dark and hard to distinguish, the pair stand on marble, or marble patterned tiles, grounding them on stone which is high value, durable and high status. It is impossible to be certain now where this portrait originally hung in Kyre Park, Sir Edward's grand restoration project and home. By 1831 the house had undergone many alterations and the family's portrait collection had apparently been 'scattered all over the house, in the servants' apartments, in the bedrooms, in the housekeeper's room, and in an attic passage where they hung falling from loose nails and perilously near the housemaid's broom'.<sup>35</sup> By the late nineteenth century however, the portrait was displayed in the hall, which, since this was a part of the house rebuilt by Sir Edward, was possibly its original position.<sup>36</sup> In addition to carved decoration, portraits took their place alongside painted texts and inscriptions, over the doors and on the walls at Kyre Park.

Just as the two Edwards shared a name, their portrait presents them as if cast from the same mould, their figures mirroring one another. The couple share the same gaze and posture, with weight on the left leg, the right forward. Each has an arm on their waist or sword hilt and

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<sup>35</sup> Amphlett, *The Kyre Park Charters*, xxix.

<sup>36</sup> Baldwyn-Childe, 'The Building of the Manor-House', *The Antiquary*, 21 (1890), p. 203; for plan of Kyre Park see also: William Page and J W Willis-Bund (eds), 'Parishes: Kyre Wyard or Kyre Magna', in *A History of the County of Worcester: Volume 4*, ed. (London, 1924), pp. 279-285. *British History Online* [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/worcs/vol4/pp279-285>, Accessed 17 May 2017].

the pair's static, upright, severe poses signal their elevated status. Although his son James was alive at this date, Sir Edward's right arm reaches down his body and his hand rests on his grandson's shoulder suggesting that this boy is his heir. Young Edward's left arm and hand lead the viewer's eye down to his sword, symbol his of gentle status. Both figures grasp the hilts of their swords and half conceal daggers at their right hips and both have their waists and lower bodies intersected by the lines of their scabbard belts. The boy's crooked elbow, with his fist resting on his hip echoes his grandfather's so that even at the young age of six he adopts the well-known gesture of assertive masculinity; the position is maintained by his padded and stiffened sleeve. Young Edward's masculinity is further emphasised by calf-skin boots and spurs, other signifiers of high status. The details of posture and gesture mean that the boy becomes a copy of the man, suggesting harmony and balance and indicating high status naturally conferred between generations so that the image becomes one of dynastic confidence. The portrait contains only minimal props, the dog in the bottom right hand corner may indicate the appropriate rural sport of hunting or signify fidelity. A curious detail of Sir Edward's costume is the small gilt key or seal suspended under his crooked arm from a velvet cord which runs round the back of his neck and under his ruff across his chest which may represent his post of filazer.

While the poses are mirrored, their costumes are contrasted, though both are high status court wear. Young Edward's dress is made of luxurious fabric in silver and vermilion with a delicate lace collar and cuffs. In contrast, his grandfather wears a black satin and velvet doublet and hose with a short cape with ruff and cuffs suggesting sobriety and serious intent. The vermilion dress is expensively made, tied at the front with tiny buttons and bows and patterned with a design of twining leaves and stems. The fabric was both exotic and extremely

expensive and depicted with great painterly skill, the delicate lace at the cuffs and shoulders overlaying the bright fabric underneath.<sup>37</sup> The pigment, expensive vermillion, costume and technique represent the boy as being of great value. At six years old, it is appropriate that young Edward was not breeched and wears a dress, however its lavish appearance and impracticability associates him with children of the court, not the country; perhaps in another indication of his future elevation. While it might appear contradictory that he is depicted as a young, un-breeched boy, while at the same time wearing the signifiers of adult masculinity such as short hair, the sword, dagger and spurs, this apparent paradox appears in other portraits of boys in the period.<sup>38</sup> These boys' status in their portraits is liminal, their clothes suggest that they have not yet left childhood despite acquiring some of the necessary accessories of manhood. They have not entered the stage of 'boyhood' usually achieved after the age of six or seven, after which boys were breeched and assumed adult male clothing.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Vermilion was a common pigment made from either the mineral cinnabar or its manufactured equivalent; Rica Jones, 'The Methods and Materials of Three Tudor Artists: Bettes, Hilliard and Ketel', in *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630*, ed. by Karen Hearn (Tate Publishing, 1995), p. 240.

<sup>38</sup> William Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For example in the portrait of Barbara Gamage and her children by Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, of 1596, the oldest boys are unbreeched but wear swords Marcus Gheeraerts II, *Barbara Gamage with Six Children*, 1596, oil on canvas, private collection. Elsewhere however, un-breeched boys are depicted with toys or animals appropriate for their age, as in the portrait of Thomas Lucy and his family.

<sup>39</sup> Carole Collier Frick, 'Boys to Men: Codpieces and Masculinity in Sixteenth-Century Europe', in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2011), p. 158.



Figure 3:5 English School, *Lady Mary Pytts* (detail), 1612, oil on panel, private collection

This portrait was part of a programme commissioned by Sir Edward Pytts which included others of his son James and daughter-in-law Mary Pytts, (Fig. 3:5) mother of young Edward, commissioned the same year, 1612, and probably by the same artist; sadly the portrait of James Pytts appears to be lost.<sup>40</sup> This discussion prompts speculation as to why Sir Edward Pytts chose to represent himself alone with his young grandson rather than commission the group in one frame or depict the boy with his parents. Cost may have played a part but presumably the main reason was to reinforce claims to distinguished lineage, stretching both into the past and the future. Such lineage depended only on male members of the family and while young Edward projected the male line forward in time, his grandfather's grey hair and beard suggest both time past and wisdom. The Pytts family's great wealth was acquired in one

<sup>40</sup> The view that this portrait was one of a pair is supported by comments made in 1851 by a family member who recalled the portraits at Kyre Park as being scattered around the house, noting 'We never knew who the very curiously dressed gentleman and lady on wood were', Amphlett, *The Kyre Park Charters*, xxix, and also by her typical left facing pose.

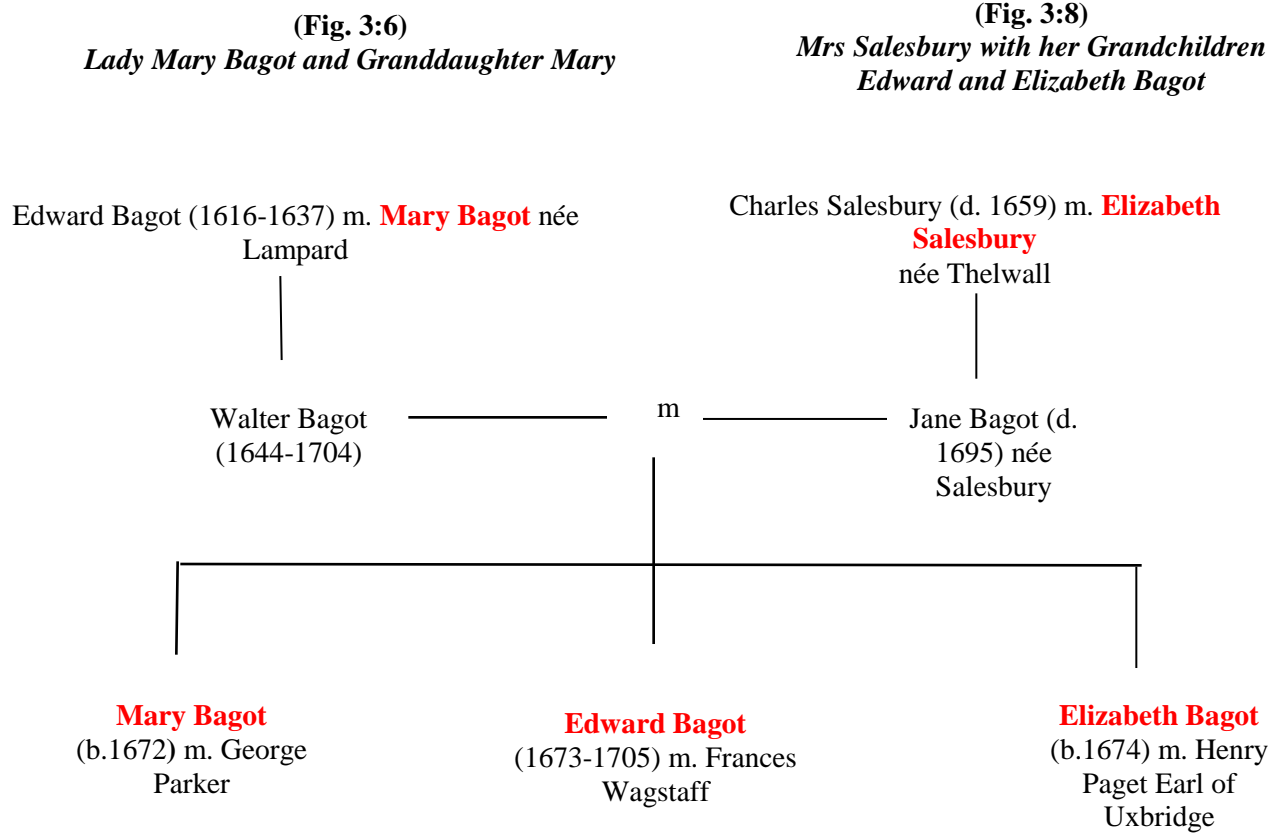
generation in London by Sir Edward and spent on the trappings of elite country life in Worcestershire, particularly on the rebuilding of their home; investment in houses was often mirrored by investment in portraits. The depiction of long lineage was particularly important for a family like the Pytts for whom it had to be largely fabricated and the portrait and newly restored house were material prompts in the creation of a foundational narrative. The portrait suggests wealth being passed down the generations from the soberly, but prestigiously dressed grandfather, to his flamboyantly and extravagantly dressed grandson who confidently displays his inherited fortune in his costume and gilt handled sword, as if in anticipation of future wealth, elevation and status.

## Case Study 2: The Bagot Portraits



Figure 3:6 John Michael Wright, *Lady Mary Bagot and her Granddaughter Mary*, 1675-6, oil on canvas, Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage

Fig. 3:7 Bagot and Salesbury family tree.  
Members in the portraits in red





Sixty three years after Sir Edward Pytts commissioned his double portrait, on December 9th 1675, the Staffordshire gentleman Sir Walter Bagot commissioned six portraits of his close family, together with two landscapes for his family home, Blithfield Hall near Rugeley, Staffordshire. The two portraits of interest here are those of Sir Walter's widowed mother-in-law, Mrs Elizabeth Salesbury with her grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot and the other of his own mother, also a widow, Lady Mary Bagot with her granddaughter Mary. (Figs 3:6 and 3:8). The children were Sir Walter's eldest surviving son and heir Edward, and his two eldest daughters Elizabeth and Mary.<sup>41</sup>

These two portraits are so closely linked that they will be discussed together, although each will also be subject to individual scrutiny. This analysis is supported with archival evidence which presents the opportunity to examine the specific historical and familial background of the portraits and prompts the wider exploration of the links between portraits on the one hand and the ideals of the family on the other, particularly in regard to age, widowhood, gender and rank.<sup>42</sup>

The rare opportunity for the close scrutiny of Wright's relationship with the Bagot family is presented by the survival of the Bachymbyd Letters discussed in Chapter One.<sup>43</sup> An important contribution to the historiography of the portrait of Mrs Salesbury and her

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<sup>41</sup> Family birth, marriage and death dates based on transcripts of parish registers of St Leonard's Church, Blithfield in: William 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Bagot, *Memorials of the Bagot Family* 1 vol. (1823) SRO D3260/8.

<sup>42</sup> Karen Hearn, 'John Michael Wright, Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot, 1675-6' (2001) [tate.org.uk/art/wright-portrait-of-mrs-salesbury-with-her-grandchildren-edward-and-elizabeth-bagot-t06750, Accessed May 2016]; Smith, William James, 'Letters from Michael Wright', *The Burlington Magazine*, 95, No. 604, (Jul. 1953), pp. 233-236; Mary Bustin, 'John Michael Wright (1617-1794) Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren, Edward and Elizabeth Bagot 1676', in *Paint and Purpose: A Study of Technique in British Art* ed. by Rica Jones Stephen Hackney, and Joyce Townsend, (London: Tate Gallery, 1999) pp.32-37.

<sup>43</sup> See also Sara Stevenson, Duncan Thomson and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, *John Michael Wright, the King's Painter* (1982); Thomson, 'Wright, John Michael', *ODNB*.

grandchildren comes from Karen Hearn in her Tate online catalogue entry, usefully augmented by Mary Bustin in *Paint and Purpose* which provides invaluable insights into the materiality of the portrait.<sup>44</sup> The place and representation of widows in the early modern family forms part of the discussion of these portraits which draws attention to contrasts between their depiction in portraits and their lived experience deduced from textual sources.<sup>45</sup>

John Michael Wright was a prominent artist whose career was somewhat overshadowed by the more popular royal favourite, Lely, with whom he attempted to compete both on price and reliability, stressing to Sir Walter: ‘I shall not presume or pretend to do as Mr Lilly did by your Lady to begin her picture at one rate, and finish it the year following at a higher rate.’<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact that Wright painted at least three family groups and other portraits of children, he was evidently not comfortable with his young sitters, complaining to Sir Walter in October 1676:

... And as I have often promised (much after the humour of women in labour) never to make more children’s pictures again, yet after the trouble is over I have still relapsed, but now I think I have done, having almost killed two or three children with colds though in the heat of summer designing them naked, they crying and bawling about me and their mothers.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Hearn ‘Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren’ and Bustin, *Paint and Purpose*.

<sup>45</sup> Particularly: Sandra Cavallo, and Lyndan Warner, *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (Harlow: Longman, 1999); J.S.W. Helt, ‘*Memento Mori*: Death, Widowhood and Remembering in Early Modern England’, in *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Allison Levy (Hampshire and Vermont: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 39-55; Erin J Campbell, ‘Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs: Portraits of Old Women in Early Modern Italy’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 63 (2010), 807-49; Allison M., Levy, *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2003); Barbara J. Todd, ‘The Virtuous Widow in Protestant England’, in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* ed. by Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Harlow, Essex, UK ; New York: Longman, 1999), pp.66-83.

<sup>46</sup> NLW Bachymbyd Letters, 303b (October 9<sup>th</sup> 1676).

<sup>47</sup> NLW Bachymbyd letters 304 (October 24 1676).

### **i. Lady Mary Bagot and her Granddaughter Mary**

Discussion of the two portraits begins with that of Lady Mary Bagot and her granddaughter Mary (Fig. 3:6).<sup>48</sup> The Bagots were long established in Staffordshire, Walter Bagot's mother Mary, the adult in the portrait, was a widow when she married his father, bringing a considerable fortune in property into her new marriage, most of which was sold to meet the Bagot's civil war debts.<sup>49</sup> The child in the portrait is Lady Mary's granddaughter and namesake who was the first of Walter and Jane Bagot's daughters, born on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1672 and aged between four and five in the portrait.<sup>50</sup>

The almost square format of this portrait, with its centrally placed triangular composition gives it a mathematical precision, Lady Mary's heavy skirt forms the base of the triangle while her black mourning veil creates the sides, rising to the top of her head, drawing attention to her pale face, topped with her headdress with its widow's peak cap. Her enigmatic gaze and heavy-lidded eyes express neither sorrow nor joy and are focussed on the middle distance, something which Wright may have adapted from the Italian Renaissance portraits

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<sup>48</sup> Thanks to Rachel Lambert of Wolverhampton Museum and Art Gallery for access to this portrait. Two copies of this portrait were made, one of which has omitted the figure of young Mary altogether and placed a fan in Lady Bagot's hand; the other is a more accurate copy but lacks the subtlety and vigour of the original (NPG Heinz Archive).

<sup>49</sup> Her first marriage appears to have been childless, but she had seventeen children with Sir Edward, six of whom survived, Walter being their third son and heir; *Ibid.* and Smith, William James (ed.) Board of Celtic, Studies University of Wales. *Calendar of Salusbury Correspondence, 1553-Circa 1700 : Principally from the Lleweni, Rûg, and Bagot Collections in the National Library of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1954) Table II sheet C. Her will of 1685 exhibited a conventional piety, and after individual bequests to her children, she left 'to everyone of my Grandchildren two twenty shilling pieces of broad gold' TNA, PROB/11/388, Will of Lady Mary Bagot, 1686; Greenslade, M. W., 'Bagot family (*per. c.* 1490–1705)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/71871>, accessed 13 May 2017].

<sup>50</sup> SRO, D3260/8, *Memorials of the Bagot Family* 1 vol. 1823; The inscription in the top right corner was added after its completion but nevertheless is correct, she did marry Sir George Parker of Ratton in February 1692, giving birth to three sons and four daughters, Paula Watson and Sonya Wynne, 'Parker, Sir George, 2nd Bt. (c. 1673-1727), of Ratton, Willingdon, Suss.', (2002), [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/parker-sir-george-1673-1727>, Accessed May 2017].

with which he was familiar, and designed to convey thoughtfulness and melancholy.<sup>51</sup> Her granddaughter, in contrast, engages the viewer with a direct gaze, suggesting the naturalness and spontaneity expected of a child. Across its centre, the black triangular dress is intersected by the old lady's pale, elongated arm which lies across her lap, directing attention to the wreath of dried or everlasting flowers which she shares with young Mary, whose left arm reaches out to receive it. The everlasting flowers passing between the two may be emblematic both of their eternal bond of affection as well as the endurance of feminine virtues passing between generations. Lady Bagot's left arm encircles her granddaughter in an affectionate gesture, enclosing the child's body, which is draped in a costume of bright blue and gold; the girl leans on her grandmother's knee in an attitude of confident familiarity.

The long fringes of Lady Mary's veil fall across the arm of her elaborate dull gold chair with its carved high back which suggests her seniority, as does her upright pose.<sup>52</sup> Her black veil and peak testify that Lady Mary was still in mourning for her second husband thirteen years after his death in March 1673 and she is dressed appropriately, entirely in black, apart from her plain white taffeta or silk under sleeves.<sup>53</sup> Above her chest is a transparent gauze with her white under garment just showing at the edge, gathered at the neck and held with a single pearl. This is her only jewel apart from a cameo brooch embellished with another single drop pearl which hangs at the front of her bodice. The cameo is cut with a classical-style profile of a man, perhaps her late husband. Such mourning jewellery was popular and

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<sup>51</sup> Erin J. Campbell, 'Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs: Portraits of Old Women in Early Modern Italy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 63 (2010), 807-49. p. 825.

<sup>52</sup> The chair is unlike the usual jointed English armed chairs of the period and may be an antique Venetian chair, Timothy Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style* (London Phaidon Press Ltd, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> SRO, D3260/8, *Memorials of the Bagot Family* 1 vol. 1823, p. 136; Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress : A Costume and Social History* (London ; Boston: G. Allen and Unwin, 1983) pp. 92 – 105.

common among the wealthy, serving as reminders of the dead and acting also as *memento mori*, to remind the living of the inevitability of death and, since they were often expensive and probably specially made, also signified wealth and high status.<sup>54</sup> Jewellery such as this, which contained an image of the deceased, was an important part of the process of remembrance and played a role in early modern mourning rituals. It was a widow's duty to construct a 'good memory' of her husband suggesting that even after death she continued to valorise him.<sup>55</sup> As a widow, Lady Mary's jewel suggests the continuing presence of her husband, signifying that she was the 'ideal' kind of widow, maintaining the memory of her late husband and living as a 'perpetual wife', still under his authority, while the single pearl suggests her continuing faithfulness.<sup>56</sup>

Although her hair is still dark and half hidden under her veil, Lady Mary's face shows signs of aging; the flesh around her eyes and under her chin sags a little, in contrast to the clear, fresh complexion of her granddaughter whose face, unwavering gaze and dimpled wrists proclaim her childishness. Young Mary's gold hair signifies her innocence and virginity, falling loose around her shoulders. In contrast to her grandmother's dress, the child's costume mimics classical styles, her cloak is brilliant with ultramarine blue and the carefully painted highlights of her dress make the gold thread of the fabric appear to glint. Her white sleeves are held above her elbow with a band of gold thread and beads which echo the fastening of her cloak. The contrast between youth and age are strongly emphasised in this portrait, as is the sitters' femininity.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 224.

<sup>55</sup> J.S.W. Helt, '*Memento Mori*: Death, Widowhood and Remembering', pp. 39-55.

<sup>56</sup> Todd, 'The Virtuous Widow', pp.66-83.

The pair are framed by a mistily romantic background, to the right of which is a formal garden with a pool and fountain in the foreground, behind that a flight of steps leads to an arbour, beyond which a stand of trees is outlined against a soft orange coloured sunset or sunrise characteristic of Wright's style. To the left of the frame and behind the chair is a darkly lit group of trees, probably oaks. Wright spent time at Blithfield Hall during the summer of 1676 and it is possible that the background references reality while his penchant for allegory suggests that it may also have had symbolic resonance, the fountain perhaps suggesting fertility while the ambiguous sunrise/sunset may suggest the convergence of youth and old age. Oak trees have the potential to evoke long lineage and family strength and Robert Plot draws attention to the rarity and quality of the oaks at Blithfield.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Stafford-Shire* (Oxford : printed at the theater 1686).

## ii. The portrait of Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot



Figure 3:8 John Michael Wright, *Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot*, 1675-6, oil and oil-and-resin on canvas, Tate Collection

The larger, more complex and expensive of the Bagot commissions of 1675-6 depicts Sir Walter's mother-in-law, Mrs Salesbury with his children Edward and Elizabeth, for this he paid £40.<sup>58</sup> This portrait has been the subject of scholarly investigation and Hearn describes it as 'the pivotal work' in the group.<sup>59</sup> The context for this work was the bitter dispute between the Salesbury and Bagot families concerning the transfer of land following the marriage of Sir Walter and Jane Salesbury in 1670, during which her entitlement to inherit was disputed by

<sup>58</sup> Thanks to Tate for privileged access to this portrait. Hearn, 'John Michael Wright, Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren'.

<sup>59</sup> NLW Bachymbyd Letters 329a pt2 (March 19<sup>th</sup> 1676/7); Hearn, Tate Catalogue entry, (April 2008).

members of her mother's family.<sup>60</sup> The result was a seven year legal battle which became so acrimonious that even in the year in which Wright was working on the portraits, moves were made to appoint independent guardians for the children.<sup>61</sup> Hearn argues that this work was used in the dispute as a visual statement to reinforce the children's entitlement to the land.<sup>62</sup>

This portrait, like the other, is almost square, although the main figure here is set to the right of the canvas with a strong diagonal line down the centre formed by a chain of dark and light tones. To the right of this diagonal, set against the dark background of an interior, is the formidable figure of Mrs Salesbury, her pale face stark against her black headdress and the wall. Her strong gaze meets the viewer's from under hooded watery eyes, although she remains expressionless. To the left of the vertical line and apparently seen through a window, is another of Wright's characteristically russet and olive coloured landscapes with pleasant fields in the foreground and mountains in the distance worked with loose, almost careless brush strokes. This is a view of the Clwyd Hills, specifically Moel Famau, which Mrs Salesbury could see from her home at Pool Park near Ruthin and was part of the disputed estate.<sup>63</sup> The bodies of the children both frame and lean into this landscape and connect them to it in a way which suggests ownership. The landscape and sky are intersected by the strong dark trunk and branches of a tree from which hang a few wintry leaves, perhaps suggesting the acrimonious debate raging over this landscape.

The diagonal line is formed by the figure of young Edward in the bottom left corner, his gaze leading upwards towards his sister and grandmother; a gaze whose line is reinforced

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<sup>60</sup> Hearn, 'John Michael Wright Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren'.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



by a chain of baby arms and hands leading across his sister's chubby chest and up to the conical black hat worn by their grandmother in the top right hand corner. The hat is worn over a mourning hood and widows' peak cap, a style which was common throughout Britain at this date, a reminder that she had been a widow for about fifteen years.<sup>64</sup> Mrs Salesbury's mourning attire is completed with a long black over-dress in velvet or taffeta worn over a black dress and white undergarment with slashed sleeves from which white fabric billows, held with a pearl and gold clasp. The front of her dress is fastened with gold and pearl clasps, above which is an elaborate brooch in diamond, pearl and gold which Hearn dates to the 1620s or 1630s and suggests may have been an inherited object.<sup>65</sup> She also wears a wedding ring and silver and diamond ring and, on her left arm, a gold bracelet with square cut semi-precious stone mounted in gold. The jewellery is painted with care using delicate raised areas of paint. Over her shoulders and held at the front, Mrs Salesbury wears a cape with a deep trim of ermine fur. The group is placed in an interior with rust coloured curtains drawn back behind her seated figure, against which the gilt of her chair stands out. The chair, which Hearn identifies as a Venetian sgabello chair dating from about 1500, is embellished with a carved cherub and female figure.<sup>66</sup> While this chair is a seemingly minor detail, it makes an important statement about the family's antiquity, wealth and classical tastes.<sup>67</sup>

Young Edward Bagot was no more than a toddler of two when the portrait was commissioned, three when it was completed.<sup>68</sup> He stands against a stone balustrade supported

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* The date of Charles Salesbury's death is uncertain but probably between 1659 and 1661; Smith, *Calendar of Salesbury Correspondence*, Index p 283 gives the date of death as 1661, Hearn *Ibid* as 1659.

<sup>65</sup> Hearn, Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren'.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Born on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1673; *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> SRO, D3260/8, *Memorials of the Bagot Family* 1 vol. 1823, p. 130.

by a curved pillar, the top of which is chipped, perhaps in another allusion to the troublesome legal case, or merely a reference to antiquity. His costume suggests the boy's great value and even imperial ambitions as it imitates classical dress with a robe of ultramarine over a white silk under-shirt whose sleeves fall to his wrists, held back with a band of gold beads. His scarlet/orange cloak, probably painted in red lake, is held at the right shoulder with another ring of gold beads. In the crook of his right arm he holds a golden toy horse on wheels which has a red rope to pull it along; such a toy was suitable as a play thing for an elite boy of his age but is also a reminder of the imperial statues with which Wright would have been familiar from his days in Rome. The horse also appears to be a studio prop used in other portraits and is another reminder of young Edward's future high status, of which horses were signifiers.<sup>69</sup>

With his left hand Edward offers his sister Elizabeth a doll on which her gaze is focused and which she reaches out her right hand to touch or take, this gift probably signifies her future role as a wife and mother.<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth is seated on her grandmother's lap, the upper part of her chest is bare and her left arm is extended, holding what Hearn considers to be either a pomander, containing ambergris or some sweet smelling oil or perhaps a bezoar, an object believed to have a number of medicinal properties.<sup>71</sup> As Elizabeth's chubbiness and active pose suggest, she was a toddler of one and a half, rather than a baby, swathed in a lavish gold and ultramarine blue cloth studded with dozens of pearls and worn over a white

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<sup>69</sup> For example John Michael Wright, *Lady Catherine Cecil and James Cecil, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Salisbury*, oil on canvas, Hatfield House, reproduced in Stevenson and Thomson, *John Michael Wright*, p. 75

<sup>70</sup> Young Elizabeth was baptised in March 1674, SRO D3260/8, *Memorials of the Bagot Family* 1 vol. (1823) p.130; a role which she failed to fulfil, since she did not marry until 1739 when she was about sixty four, becoming the second wife of Henry Paget, who as the inscription on the right of the canvas suggests, became Earl of Uxbridge in 1719; Stuart Handley, 'Paget, Hon. Henry (1663-1743), of Beaudesert, Staffs.; West Drayton, Mdx.; and Jermyn Street, London', (2002), [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/paget-hon-henry-1663-1743>], Accessed May 2017].

<sup>71</sup> Hearn, 'John Michael Wright Portrait of Mrs Salesbury'.

silk under dress held in place by her grandmother's left hand. The cloth resembles a rich christening blanket, although the colour is a little unusual since red was a more common choice.<sup>72</sup> On her head she wears a lace and silk cap, decorated at the side with pink rosettes and painted with great skill and care.

Despite the importance of this work, Wright executed it on two discarded, rubbed down canvasses, one of which, Bustin notes, originally depicted a lady in ringlets and a feathered headdress.<sup>73</sup> She also notes that the unusual, almost square dimensions of the portrait necessitated adding a strip of primed cloth to the left edge which was crudely stitched with tent stitch, leaving a line running through Edward's left cheek and up the landscape above. The trough created by the seam was filled with salmon-coloured primer to match the surrounding area and is still clearly visible on the surface of the canvas.

One of the reasons Wright thought that this picture would 'never have an end' may well have been that he made a number of significant changes to the composition.<sup>74</sup> These are evident in x-ray images which show that in the original version Mrs Salesbury held a swaddled baby in an upright position instead of the robust and active Elizabeth.<sup>75</sup> The position of her brother's arm was shifted a number of times before the final composition was resolved; in the earlier version he offered his sister a flower, possibly an anemone, instead of the doll.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Bustin and Hearn both suggest it is a christening gown: Bustin, 'John Michael Wright (1617-1794) Mrs Salesbury with Her Grandchildren, Edward and Elizabeth Bagot 1676', in *Paint and Purpose: A Study of Technique in British Art* ed. by Rica Jones Stephen Hackney, and Joyce Townsend, (London: Tate Gallery, 1999), p. 35; Hearn, Catalogue entry, Tate online, 'John Michael Wright Portrait of Mrs Salesbury', however red was a more common colour for christening shawls see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85015/christening-blanket-unknown/>.

<sup>73</sup> Bustin, *Paint and Purpose* p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Bustin, *Paint and Purpose* p. 35.

The decision to change details of the composition may have been due to the fact that during the time it took Wright to complete the work, Elizabeth had grown from a partially swaddled baby of nine months in December 1675 to a sturdy toddler.

The adult figures in these two portraits are not only grandmothers but also widows, their status prominently displayed through their costumes and headdresses. While these women were depicted as ‘virtuous’ or ‘ideal’ widows, whose representation in the portraits was designed to bring honour to the family, the archival sources offer a different narrative, one of family animosity and dislocated relationships in which the two women acted independently, often in their own rather than their families’ interests.

In seventeenth-century England, widowhood was arguably a more significant event for women than for men whose legal, economic and social status barely changed on their wives’ death, while a woman’s altered radically on the death of her husband.<sup>77</sup> Widows were no longer considered legally controlled by their husband and they entered what was, for some, the most independent period of their lives, although still subject to social, religious and family constraints. Portraits of widows are a significant genre, serving both to present and perpetuate their husband’s memory, and as part of the ritual of remembering whereby their own, their husband’s and their families’ social and religious legacies were correctly communicated.<sup>78</sup> Social constraints on widows to exhibit proper behaviour were severe and included

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<sup>77</sup> Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, Essex, UK; New York: Longman, 1999), p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Allison M Levy, *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2003) p. 8.

stereotyping on stage and in print and fell into three well-known types: the ‘good or ideal’ widow, the ‘merry’ widow and the ‘poor’ widow.<sup>79</sup>

Pressure for widows to conform to the first stereotype came from both the church and the writers of advice and conduct literature. Richard Brathwaite for example, author of the *English Gentlewoman* of 1631 warns of the perils of the ‘merry widow’ claiming that: ‘For a widow to love society, albeit her intentions relish nothing but sobriety, gives speedy wings to spreading infamy’.<sup>80</sup> The ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ widow Brathwaite declared, was one who keeps the memory of her husband alive by living a chaste and private life.<sup>81</sup> He offers respect to the ‘ideal’ widow, providing she conformed, especially by remaining chaste and he writes: ‘This inestimable inheritance of Chastity is incomparably more to be esteemed, and with greater care preserved by *Widows* than *Wives*: albeit, by these neither to be neglected, but highly valued.’<sup>82</sup> This ideal should, he contends, be offered as an example to young women and be underpinned with piety.<sup>83</sup>

The contrasts between ‘merry’ and ‘ideal’ widows were found on the stage, in ballads and literature, family portraits however, only represent widows as ‘virtuous’, something designed to apportion them a particular, virtuous role in the moral ordering of the family. In her paper on the subject of portraits of old women in early modern Italy, Erin Campbell has drawn attention to the significant function of these portraits both in documenting the life stages of women, and acting as pedagogical aids.<sup>84</sup> Additionally she makes a claim for the

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<sup>79</sup> Cavallo and Warner, *Widowhood*, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Brathwaite, Richard *The English gentlewoman*, (1631), accessed through Early English Books Online.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* document image 79, p. 111.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* document image 80, p. 112.

<sup>84</sup> Erin J. Campbell, ‘Prophets, Saints, and Matriarchs: Portraits of Old Women in Early Modern Italy’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 63 (2010), pp. 807-49.

representation of old women as having moral and spiritual functions because sitters were modelled on examples of elderly saints, prophets and matriarchs whose contemplation served to foster virtuous behaviour.<sup>85</sup>

The Bagot portraits certainly construct the widows as ‘ideal’ or ‘virtuous’; both are appropriately dressed, while the prominent jewel worn by Lady Mary Bagot probably displays her husband’s image in a way which suggests that she remains under his headship. The pair’s apparently tender care for their grandchildren indicates their position as spiritual protectors and role models for the young, recording for posterity not only their individual virtues, but the perpetuation of feminine virtues down the generations, symbolised by the wreath of everlasting flowers passed to her granddaughter by Lady Bagot and the large quantity of pearls adorning the costumes of Mrs Salesbury and Elizabeth. It is probable that there was genuine affection between the grandmothers and their grandchildren, Hearn suggests that little Elizabeth, who bore Mrs Salesbury’s name, was also her god-daughter and was ‘obviously’ her grandmother’s favourite as she was the recipient of £1,000, a pair of silver candlesticks, and a silver basin and cup in her will.<sup>86</sup>

Generally, portraits of family groups present images of stable, unified, pious, wealthy, successful, long established families. However, placing these two portraits in the context of their corresponding textual sources, evidence of another sort emerges and both women appear as independent, combative and belligerent while their family’s opinion of them is at best, qualified. These contradictions draw attention to the fact that since family portraits represent

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 815.

<sup>86</sup> Hearn, Catalogue entry, Tate online, ‘John Michael Wright Portrait of Mrs Salesbury’,

ideals, they may conceal as much as they reveal about the private lives and relationships of the people they depict.

The bitter rift between the Bagot and Salesbury families over the transfer of the Welsh estates came to a head over the marriage arrangements between Walter Bagot and Jane Salesbury. Negotiations between his father Sir Edward, and the Salesbury family over the possibility of a marriage appear in letters from 1669, although there were probably face-to-face discussions earlier.<sup>87</sup> Sir Edward makes it clear that his son expected to marry for money, and wrote to Judge Robert Millward: ‘Walt is come in pursuit of a fortune’, softening this mercenary tone by adding ‘should she [Jane Salesbury] marry into the nobility she may have a greater estate but fall much short of that happiness she may find in [the Bagot] family’.<sup>88</sup> Occasionally there is a note of desperation from the Bagots, who as Vivienne Larminie notes, were only just clearing their civil war debts and struggling to find a suitable match for Walter’s sister Mary; it seems they badly needed the added revenue from the Salesbury’s Welsh estates.<sup>89</sup>

By 21st December 1669 Sir Edward was still reassuring about the value and condition of his estate at Blithfield but the matter was not resolved by the spring of the following year when in May he protested: ‘Much troubled at the obstruction made by Mrs Salesbury’s relations ... it is so strangely managed that [I] believe it a design mostly of malice.’<sup>90</sup> Despite misgivings, the wedding arrangements were eventually concluded and the couple married in

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<sup>87</sup> Smith (ed.) *Calendar of Salesbury Correspondence* (413 9<sup>th</sup> September 1669), p. 186.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* (414 October 28<sup>th</sup> 1669) p. 414.

<sup>89</sup> V. M. Larminie, ‘Wealth, Kinship, and Culture : The Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World’, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK Rochester, NY, USA: Royal Historical Society Boydell Press, 1995).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* Smith (ed.) *Calendar of Salesbury Correspondence*, 428-440 29<sup>th</sup> March -440 17<sup>th</sup> May 1670 and 441 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1670 pp.192-197.

July 1670, and returned to Blithfield where Jane gave birth to their first son Salisbury on November 21<sup>st</sup> the following year.<sup>91</sup> Details from the archival sources present Mrs Salesbury as a formidable and independent widow acting on behalf of her daughter as the head of her household displaying managerial skills and playing a leading role in the negotiations over the financial details of the marriage settlement, a long way from Brathwaite's pious and private widow.

Lady Mary Bagot, like Mrs Salesbury, was far from the 'ideal' cloistered and docile widow of her portrait and her relationship with her eldest son eventually broke down entirely over her refusal to relinquish her jointure. In her will of 1685, the year before her death, she left Sir Walter a mere £20, and after various bequests to her other children and grandchildren, left the remainder of her estate to her second son Lambert, appointing him her sole executor, responsible for her burial.<sup>92</sup> On his father's death in 1673 Sir Walter naturally inherited both his father's title and estates and there seems to have been an affectionate relationship between the pair. However in a hand written, possibly nuncupative will, written just before his death, Sir Edward changed his mind about appointing his wife as executrix, leaving the job to his eldest son instead and writing: 'this house is hers already and she shall have all that is in it and the cows and a team of oxen and some horses.'<sup>93</sup> The bitterness between Sir Walter and his mother continued for years, and soon after her husband's death she left Blithfield, spending the rest of her life with her daughter Mary, wife of Richard Newdigate at Arbury Hall in Warwickshire, dying there on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1686.<sup>94</sup> She was indignant at her son's treatment

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<sup>91</sup> SRO, D3260/8, *Memorials of the Bagot Family* 1 vol. 1823, p. 136; (Salisbury died on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1673)

<sup>92</sup> TNA, PROB/11/388, Will of Lady Mary Bagot, 1686.

<sup>93</sup> family SRO, D5121/1/7/36-69, correspondence of the Bagot family.

<sup>94</sup> SRO, D5121/1/8/1-20, note inserted in bundle of papers.



of her, protesting: 'All the occasion that ever I gave for any difference between me and my son, to the best of my knowledge is this that I have desired my jointure as it was left and designed me by my husband with the legacy he left also at his death. In the demand of both I think I have been reasonable if not kind.'<sup>95</sup>

She claimed that Sir Walter had used all her money until she had nothing left, protesting at 'daily complaints made of me and to me' objecting that she had been forced to take, and live on her jointure 'not knowing how else to dispose my self being old and not so fit as my children to begin in the world again.'<sup>96</sup> The bitterness between Lady Bagot and her son is reflected in letters written in the years after her husband's death which demonstrate that, like Mrs Salesbury, much of her widowhood was spent not as the 'ideal' of her portrait but acting in her own interests.<sup>97</sup>

The wealth of textual and pictorial sources in this case study has at times threatened to overwhelm its central arguments which have been about the links between portraiture on the one hand and the ideals of the family on the other, especially in relation to the place of widowed grandmothers in late seventeenth century England. The evidence has posed wider questions about the relationship between portraits and their corresponding archival sources, and this case study has shown that each has the ability to both conceal and reveal aspects of the real and the ideal in the lives of three generations of the Bagot family. The strength and variety of sources has also drawn attention to the fact that portraits like these sit at the centre

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<sup>95</sup> SRO, D5121/1/7/51, correspondence of the Bagot family.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> SRO, D5121/1/8/1-20, correspondence of the Bagot family.

of a web of cultural, social and economic networks which include artists, their workshops and artistic practices which intersect with families and their geographic and social networks.

It has been argued that the representation of the widowed grandmothers and their grandchildren was the result of a combination of contemporary style and taste, influenced by early modern moral and religious writing which produced stereotypical notions of virtuous or ‘ideal’ widows. These were combined with the artist’s idiosyncratic preferences and Sir Walter Bagot’s desire to represent an idealised view of his family. These portraits were important in expressing the moral ordering of the family, producing a dialogue between female virtue in old age and childhood innocence. As such, these images acted as instructive aids for their audiences, fostering ideas of appropriate behaviour and appearance, perhaps made more effective through the affectionate postures of the grandmothers and their grandchildren.

The question remains as to why Sir Walter wanted to make such a large investment in a display of this sort when the family fortunes had so precariously and so recently depended on his marriage into the Salesbury family. One reason might have been that the portraits made a bold and public statement that the years of financial embarrassment were over. Another reason might have been that because the portraits were begun soon after Sir Walter inherited his title and estate in 1673, not long after his marriage and the births of his first children, he wished to celebrate a period of maturity and increasing consciousness of his legacy. In this case the portraits of the two grandmothers are a kind of visual family tree in which the reputation of the family is a central concern, the figures of the grandmothers and grandchildren serving to bridge the generations.

### **Chapter Three: conclusion**

This chapter moved beyond the nuclear family to examine images of the wider family and household, drawing attention to portraits of different kinds of family arrangements including step-families and grandparents with their grandchildren. While the first two chapters illustrated the diversity of family types experienced in the early modern period, the portraits reveal little about the quality of family life or the relationships of family members. The documentary sources which supported this section, particularly relating to the Bagot family, however, reveal a more nuanced and probably more balanced view of family life consisting of tensions and jealousy.

One of the themes of this chapter has been the ways in which the Bagots used their portraits as a way of engaging with their neighbours in the search for status. The chapter which follows demonstrates some of the complex ways in which patrons used portraits to promote their families' rank during a period of rapid social change and sets this in the context of developments in taste, technique and style in portraiture.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### REPRESENTING STATUS

#### Introduction



Figure 4:1 Unknown artist, *The Hill Family*, c. 1590, oil on stone, St Luke's Church, Ullingswick, Herefordshire

When John Hill of Nether Court in Ullingswick, Herefordshire died in 1590 his wife Elizabeth erected a portrait on a stone panel on the south wall of St Luke's Church in his memory (Fig. 4:1). It shows the dead man lying on his funeral monument in the typical attitude of prayer, surrounded by his wife and their family of two living sons and a daughter as well as two dead infants lying swaddled on the ground. Dominating the portrait is a prominent coat of arms, not her husband's, rather they were the arms to which she herself

was entitled and she used the text above the image to draw attention to her connection with the illustrious Cobham family stating:

Here lieth the body of John Hill gentleman heir to John Hill gent of the Nether courts who married the eldest daughter one of the co-heirs of Hugh Brooke esquire of Long Ashton in the county of Somerset: lineally descending from the house of the Lord Cobham & had by her three sons & two daughters: these arms came by her and he departed the life the third day of February in the XXXXIII year of the reign of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth Anno Domini 1590 upon whom the Lord have mercy <sup>1</sup>

By emphasising this distinguished pedigree Elizabeth was demonstrating her awareness of the agency which portraits had to proclaim status and was using this one to promote her children's place in the social hierarchy. In this she was typical of the many socially aspirant gentry families who commissioned portraits in order to engage in the highly competitive battle for status which raged in the English provinces in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter debates the complex relationship between the evolving practices of portraiture on the one hand and the ways in which status was represented, on the other. This meant that in the earlier part of the period, before about 1640, families like the Hills represented their collective identity through the language of heraldry, while in the later part of the period naturalistic likeness dominated family portraiture with an emphasis on refined life style, gesture and demeanour.<sup>3</sup> These representational practices evolved less in response to complex developments in the ideals of gentle status which, as discussed in the

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<sup>1</sup> It was usual for wives to use their husbands' coats of arms combined with their own, although occasionally as here they were represented by the arms of her natal family: Karen Hearn, 'Heraldry in Tudor and Jacobean Portraits', in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Nigel Ramsay (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2014), p.225.

<sup>2</sup> See Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 1-47; Ian W. Archer, 'Up and Down the Social Ladder in Elizabethan England', in *Elizabeth I & Her People*, ed. by Tarnya Cooper with Jane Eade ; (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2013), pp. 20-25.

<sup>3</sup> Bronwen Wilson, 'The Renaissance Portrait: From Resemblance to Representation', in *The Renaissance World*, ed. by J. Jeffries Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 452-80.

Introduction, remained relatively stable, than to a change of emphasis by artists and patrons and fluctuations of taste and fashion.<sup>4</sup>

The hundred years between about 1540 and 1640 were what Robert Tittler describes as a ‘malleable moment’ during which material culture responded to rapid social transformation.<sup>5</sup> He asserts that the gentry:

... strove for and flaunted the recognised attributes of gentility: the reputation for honour, lineage, and service; the possession of wealth, family arms, office, and material possessions of the appropriate quantity and quality. No wonder, then, that the need to articulate the fruits of that exercise also found frequent expression in the possession of material objects. In this fraught environment, the portrait – along with the country house, the funeral monument, the coat of arms, and other such signifiers – became an important expression of family lineage, personal identity, and social standing.<sup>6</sup>

The act of commissioning a portrait was itself to engage in an elite practice, allowing family members to ‘perform’ high status, something seen for example in the elite sports of hunting and hawking associated with the boys in the Lucy family portrait and the fine costumes of their sisters (Fig. 2:15). Format and scale were also ways of proclaiming high status, for example the full-length, near life size of the portrait of Sir Edward Pytts and his grandson (Fig. 3:4) mimics aristocratic portraiture of the period in what Joanna Woodall calls a ‘traditional idealising format which combined with mimetic or naturalistic likeness to personalise social authority and elevate the status of the sitter’.<sup>7</sup> There were other ways in which portraits celebrated status, for example through the quality and value of materials and the ability and fame of the artist.

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<sup>4</sup> For example: Tarnya Cooper and Maurice Howard, ‘Artists, Patrons and the Context for the Production of Painted Images in Tudor and Jacobean England’, in *Painting in Britain 1500-1630 : Production, Influences and Patronage* ed. by Aviva Bunstock, Tarnya Cooper, Maurice Howard, and Edward Town (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 5-28; Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait : Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales*, ed. by Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2012); Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert Tittler, ‘Social Aspiration and the Malleability of Portraiture in Post-Reformation England: The Kaye Panels of Woodsome, Yorkshire, c. 1567’, *Northern History*, 52 (2015), pp. 182-99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.278.

<sup>7</sup> Joanna Woodall, (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 2.

Woodall draws attention to strategies for depicting ancestry through identification with eminent predecessors.<sup>8</sup> In portraits this could be through reproducing physiognomic likeness between generations, as for example in the portrait of Walter Raleigh and his son (Fig. 2:11) or, particularly before about 1640, through the inclusion of heraldry in portraits. This was sometimes combined with genealogical displays such as family trees to create an illusion of distinguished lineage, seen for example in the Towneley family portrait (Fig. 5:3). It is important to notice that, particularly before about 1640, among the inherited virtues which could be articulated through portraiture was piety, signifiers of which are commonly found in portraits which also include heraldry to celebrate a family's specific values and religious ideology; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.<sup>9</sup> Pious references become less popular after about the mid seventeenth century, replaced by references to humanist virtues, bodily balance and assurance (see below).<sup>10</sup>

After about 1640 heraldry disappeared from portraits replaced, as Heal and Holmes claim, by images of individuals who '... could combine political leadership and intelligent financial management with courtesy, magnanimity and cultural sophistication in daily living.'<sup>11</sup> Sir Thomas Lucy, whose family portrait is described above, is sometimes seen as the ideal of this kind of man, 'a model of learned gentility ... also a passionate rider and huntsman'.<sup>12</sup> As discussed in Chapter One shifting models of gentility were accompanied by changes in artistic styles and methods as artists trained in heraldic schools were replaced by continentally trained artists with new methods of depicting gestures and poses more naturalistically and the body itself became a signifier of status. Families understood how the dynamic nature of portraits and other material forms could be harnessed to display more than

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Signifiers of piety include prayer books and bibles, depictions of the dead and dying, crucifixes, figures in postures of prayer and inscriptions which include prayers.

<sup>10</sup> Archer, 'Up and Down the Social Ladder', p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p 276.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

likeness, becoming images which embodied their status, values and authority.<sup>13</sup> Portraits conferred legitimacy on families who aspired to high status, whether this was through long and distinguished lineage, piety or the virtues and attributes of civility. The case studies which follow interrogate a number of portraits which use heraldry to display rank; these are followed by another group of portraits which emphasis the values of ‘civility’.

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<sup>13</sup> Harry Berger Jr, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000).



### a. Heraldry

During the hundred years or so of Tittler's 'malleable moment' status was defined chiefly by lineage, which was seen as the conjunction of blood and tenure and was the chief determinant and legitimisation of high status at that time.<sup>14</sup> The principal visual language of lineage was heraldry which could: '... sum up claims to distinction and nobility, noble achievements, marriages and blood lines and collective claims to honour'.<sup>15</sup> The study of heraldry was a subject of intense interest among English elites, and led to an explosion of heraldic displays in houses and churches by the late sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Whether such claims were fictional or real, heraldry could assist the leap of imagination which placed families among their county's social elite, playing an important part in reinforcing intergenerational memory becoming a constant presence to reconstruct and reconfigure past achievements.<sup>17</sup> The visual elements in heraldry were condensed images which described individual family members, their marriages and achievements, through the repetition of colours, patterns and motifs. Importantly, these elements had the ability to create fictional, mythic, chivalric and

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<sup>14</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p.22; Richard Marks and Ann Payne (eds), *British Heraldry from Its Origins to c.1800*, (London: British Museum Publications Ltd for the Trustees of the British Museum and the British Library, 1978); Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and Gentry Communities in Shakespeare's England', in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2014), p. 191; Richard Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History*, 23 (1998), pp. 41-70; Cust, 'William Dugdale and the Honour Politics of Stuart Warwickshire', in *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-1685*, ed. by Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 89-108; See also: Richard Cust, 'The Material Culture of Lineage in late-Tudor and early-Stuart England', in Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, David Gaimster (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London : Routledge, 2016), pp.247-274, Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and Gentry Communities in Shakespeare's England', in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2014), pp. 190-203; Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter Six, pp. 102-124; Robert Tittler, 'Early Stuart Chester as a Centre for Regional Portraiture', *Urban History*, 41 (2014), pp. 3-21; Archer, 'Up and Down the Social Ladder'.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Cust, 'William Dugdale and the Honour Politics of Stuart Warwickshire', in *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-1685*, ed. by Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2009), p. 96.

<sup>16</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, 'Claims to Status through Visual Codes: Heraldry on Post-Reformation Funeral Monuments', in *Chivalry in the Renaissance*, ed. by S. Anglo (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), pp. 145-60;

<sup>17</sup> Astri Erll, 'Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42 (2011), p. 306.

heroic pasts which served as models for subsequent generations, reinforcing a family's sense of itself as deserving of privilege and fostering a sense of belonging.

While the significance of heraldry in early modern portraits of married couples and individual sitters has been the subject of scholarly debate, far less attention has been paid to its place in the portraits of family groups.<sup>18</sup> This is a surprising omission considering the close association between family portraiture and heraldry in the vocabulary of lineage; this omission will be addressed here, where it will be argued that while the use of heraldry in all contexts had a common purpose, which was to construct an elite identity for the family, a close study of its use in family portraits can reveal subtler and more complex functions. This part of the chapter will begin by exploring some general themes and then focus more closely on portraits of the Kaye and Cornewall families of Yorkshire and Shropshire respectively, drawing particular attention to the ways in which heraldic imagery combines with other details to legitimise high status and speculating on some of the ways in which these portraits might have been used and viewed.

Heraldic imagery was not confined to the families of the aristocracy and upper gentry and was often part of decorative schemes in the homes of the minor gentry and middling sort.<sup>19</sup> Most portraits which display heraldry, particularly where it appears in portraits of minor families, demonstrate the traditional styles and techniques of early native portrait painters. In the Hill portrait for example, the coat of arms is depicted with care, using strong bright colours while the rest of the portrait is a crude, near monochrome rendering of the family scene. This draws attention to the fact that the principal mode of representation in

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<sup>18</sup> Karen Hearn, 'Heraldry in Tudor and Jacobean Portraits', in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2014), pp. 220-35; Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 102-124; Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 31-35.

<sup>19</sup> T. Hamling, '"Wanting Arms": Heraldic Decoration in Lesser Houses,' in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2014).

Elizabeth Hill's portrait was emblematic and constrained by the skills and materials available to the provincial painter she commissioned. Coats of arms were prominent in portraits of royal and aristocratic sitters throughout the late medieval and Tudor periods and was a practice adopted by ambitious families lower down the social scale by the first half of the sixteenth century. Portraits of *Lady Anne Aldersley and her children* of c. 1560 (Fig. 1:1), the family portrait of the Kaye family, known as *The Woodsome Panels* of 1567 and *The Triptych Memorial to the Cornewall Family* of 1588 are examples (Figs 4:2 and 4:3). Among the latest family portraits to include heraldic imagery were *the Holme Family* portrait of 1628 (Fig.2:4), the *Double Portrait of Mary, Lady Bowes and her son Thomas* of 1630 (Fig. 4:4) and the portrait of *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* of 1635 (Fig. 6:3).



Figure 4:2 English School, *The Woodsome Panels*, 1567, oil on panel, The Tolson Museum, Kirklees, Yorkshire



Figure 4:3 Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornwall Family (open)*, 1588, oil on panel, St Mary's Church, Burford, Salop



Figure 4:4 English School, *Double Portrait of Mary, Lady Bowes, aged 24, and her Eldest Son, Thomas*, 1630, private collection.

Portraits which include heraldry were mounted on a range of supports including vellum, parchment, board and canvas and displayed in a variety of forms from the parchment roll to the traditional wall hung format. Most portraits were intended for display in domestic contexts although there was also a small number which were displayed in churches.<sup>20</sup>

Particularly notable for their extravagant use of heraldry is a group of four portraits which take the form of folding panels with central images and side panels, the panels perhaps included to accommodate large quantities of heraldic shields.<sup>21</sup>

The position of coats of arms on the portrait's surface is highly variable; most commonly they appear in the top section and on a dark background, associated with the heads of the sitters, as for example in the portrait of Lady Ann Fitton and her children (Fig. 4:5) and that of *Sir Hervey Bagot and his third son Hervey* (Fig. 4:6).



Figure 4:5 Attributed to Zuccarro, *Ann, Lady Fitton with two of her children, Edward and Mary*, 1609, oil on canvas, Gawsworth Hall, Cheshire

<sup>20</sup> Including: British School, *Triptych portrait of the St John family* (1615), St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze; Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornwall Family*, 1588, oil on panel; St Mary's Church, Burford, Salop and Unknown artist, *The Hill family*, 1590, oil on stone, St. Luke's Church, Ullingswick, Herefordshire.

<sup>21</sup> British School, *Triptych portrait of the St John family* (1615), St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze; English School, *The Woodsome Panels*, 1567, oil on panel, The Tolson Museum, Kirklees, Yorkshire; Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornwall Family*, 1588, oil on panel, St Mary's Church, Burford, Salop; English School, *The Holme Family*, 1628, oil on panel with carved decoration, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 4:6 Unknown Artist, *Sir Hervey Bagot and his third son Hervey*, 1627, oil on canvas, Blithfield Hall, Staffordshire

Sometimes coats of arms occupy a less straightforward place within the picture frame, the portrait of three generations of the Bartholomew family, (Fig. 1:2), for example, displays a coat of arms on a shield held by the oldest son, clearly signalling his role as inheritor and perpetuator of the family name and honour.

The portrait of *Sir Thomas More* and his family by Rowland Lockey of 1593, (Fig. 4:7) displays two coats of arms above the heads of the figures to whom they relate in the traditional manner.<sup>22</sup> Hanging between these is a portrait of Anne More (née Cresacre) (1511-1577), the wife of John More, Sir Thomas More's son, with her own arms, making this a coat of arms in a small portrait, within a larger portrait. This is a complex layering of images which includes both living and dead family members which serves to unite the portrait's narrative threads of long lineage, intergenerational virtue and faith beyond the memories of the commissioning generation.<sup>23</sup> The combined use of images of dead relatives, coats of arms and mimetic representations, indicated the continued presence of the dead in the domestic context of the family, constantly rehearsing and reminding younger generations of their place in the family structure, literally keeping them under the eyes of their ancestors. This portrait

<sup>22</sup> National Portrait Gallery, 'Sir Thomas More, His Father, His Household and His Descendants', (2017) [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01734/Sir-Thomas-More-his-father-his-household-and-his-descendants?search=ap&subj=234%3BBooks+and+libraries&rNo=5>, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



has a complex provenance and is based on a number of drawings of Sir Thomas More and his household by Hans Holbein, of 1527. It is interesting to note that the original sketch from which the Lockley portrait was probably copied (Fig. 5:1) is dated to 1527, sixty six years earlier but has no coats of arms, these were presumably inserted to suit the requirements of the patron, probably Thomas More II, the grandson of Sir Thomas More.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 4:7 Rowland Lockley, after Hans Holbein the Younger, *Sir Thomas More, his Father, his Household and his Descendants*, 1593, oil on canvas, NPG

About fourteen family portraits combine mimetic portraits with heraldry while others such as the Towneley portrait includes a decorative family trees hung with shields, the twining branches of a vine on the male side and a rose on the female, all hung with heraldic

<sup>24</sup> [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01734/Sir-Thomas-More-his-father-his-household-and-his-descendants#sitter>, Accessed July 7<sup>th</sup> 2017]; The original painting by Holbein, based on the drawings, was destroyed but remains in copies by Rowland Lockley; another copy, a cabinet miniature is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01734/Sir-Thomas-More-his-father-his-household-and-his-descendants?LinkID=mp03161&role=sit&rNo=0>]; [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8821/sir-thomas-more-his-household-portrait-miniature-lockey-rowland/> Accessed June 2016]. In the miniature version the coats of arms are to the left of the frame over the heads of Sir Thomas More and his father, Sir John More and his son John with his wife Anne Cresacre, while the group to the right are framed by an open window and a garden. Anne Cresacre was the mother of Thomas More the younger and the only member of the group not lineally descended from the founders of the dynasty her, portrait with its coat of arms may suggest her part in the family's continuation, she died in 1577.

shields above naturalistic portraits of the family. This portrait had a dual function, combining an expression of long lineage with references to family faith, informing future generations about the family's place in the community of catholic gentry. While not a family portrait in the conventional sense, the highly unusual *Tabula Eliensis* of the Throckmorton family served a similar purpose (Fig. 4:8).<sup>25</sup> This very large linen cloth (now in poor condition) depicts an image of Ely Cathedral, where it was probably made. It is covered with text and roundels depicting the heads of kings and queens, including Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, together with those of monks and clerics demonstrating the family's fealty to the monarch and respect for catholic orders.<sup>26</sup> Heraldic shields cover a large area of the surface, including those of families imprisoned for their faith, amongst whom was Thomas Throckmorton, his presence indicated by his coat of arms.

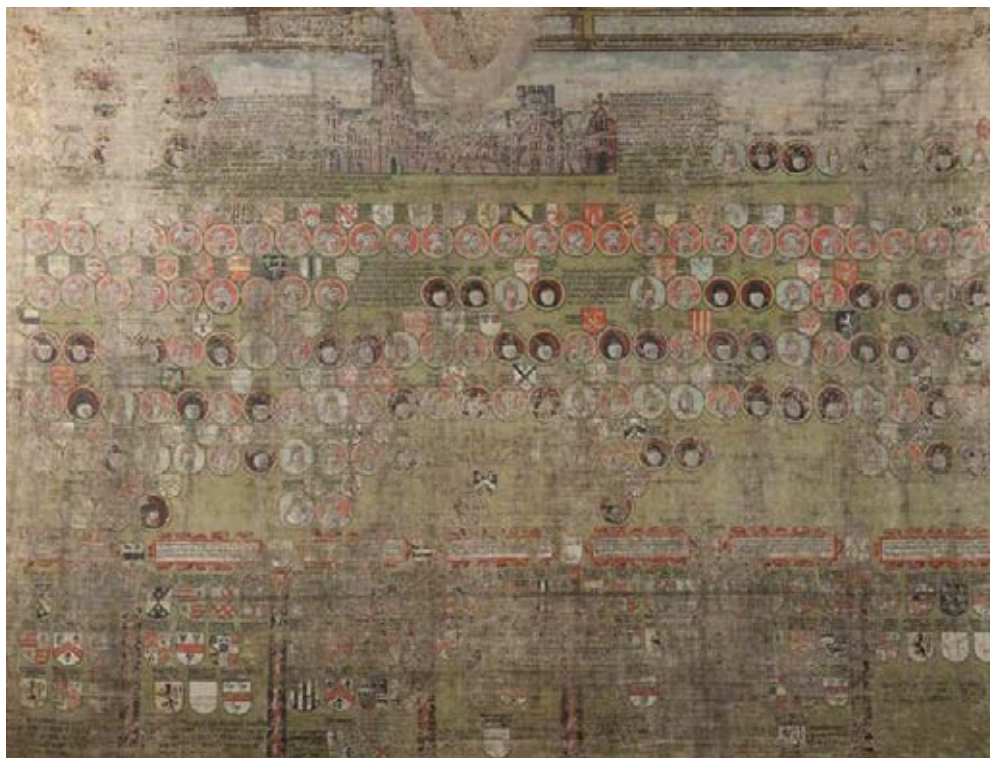


Figure 4:8 Unknown maker, *Tabula Eliensis*, 1596, oil on linen, Coughton Court, Warwickshire, ©National Trust Images/John Hammond

<sup>25</sup> Unknown maker, *The Tabula Eliensis* at Coughton Court, (1596) [<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/coughton-court/features/the-tabula-eliensis-at-coughton-court>, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*



The period's obsession with genealogy is demonstrated by the creation of illuminated family rolls, of which *The Hesketh Roll* of c.1594 is an example, combining exquisite painted portraits with text on a large overall scale to create authority and visual impact (Fig. 2:5). This work is mounted on a series of six vellum sheets cut from an original roll which measured fifty three centimetres by five hundred and sixty four.<sup>27</sup> In its original form it consisted of a finely painted oak branch with acorns and leaves which ran throughout its length, linking the male members of the tree on the left side.<sup>28</sup> The female line is connected in similar fashion but with rose and laurel branches on the right.<sup>29</sup> This roll evidently carried great authority since it was used as evidence during the heraldic visitation of 1613. It shares several common features with the Shirley genealogy discussed by Richard Cust including, it seems likely, its function, which was both 'didactic and representational'.<sup>30</sup> Both rolls were probably intended for public display in the families' chief seats where they would have served as vital elements in the construction of distinguished lineage. The use of repeated heraldic patterns echoes down the generations, each reinforcing the other while also suggesting individuality and acknowledging a specific place in the family.

The discussion so far has indicated that the presence of heraldry in portraits could have other functions in addition to expressing status through long lineage, for example its use in the Towneley and Throckmorton portraits had didactic and even subversive functions. Attention now shifts to two particular portraits, those of the Cornewall and Kaye families (the latter known as the Woodsome Panels), commissioned twenty one years apart and from distant geographic areas but both combine extensive use of heraldic elements with physiognomic likeness and iconographic details to indicate high status (Figs 4:2 and 4:3).

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<sup>27</sup> Marks and Payne, *British Heraldry from Its Origins to c.1800*, p. 93; Rev. W. G. Proctor, 'Notes on the Hesketh Pedigree', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 62 (1910), pp. 58-66.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour', p.40.

Both portraits have a folded panel form, the Cornewall's is a triptych while the Kaye's has four panels. In both cases the panels may have been specifically designed to allow space for the large quantity of shields.

### **Case Study 1 : The Kaye Family portrait**

The Kaye family portrait also known as *The Woodsome Panels*, (Figs 4:2, 4:9 and 4:10) was unusually, constructed to hang perpendicular to the wall, suspended on eye hooks so that with the two outside panels folded on the reverse so that it could be viewed on both sides, perhaps, since its details are very fine, this was at eye level prompting its viewers to move around from one side to the other.<sup>31</sup> The Kayes were landowners in west Yorkshire and were typical of many ambitious families, who prospered during a period of rapid economic expansion through land owning, mining and iron forging.<sup>32</sup> As their financial fortunes improved, their social ambitions expanded and this portrait represent a moment in that expansion.<sup>33</sup> The two central panels depict individual portraits of John and Dorothy Kaye associated with exceptionally long text panels which outline their piety, correctly gendered attributes and claims to gentility through behaviour such as hospitality.

The left hand panel (Fig. 4:9) is a display of sixty-six coats of arms on a black background with scrolls identifying the senior Yorkshire families with whom the couple wished to be associated. Extensive displays of arms comparable to these became fashionable decorative features in gentry homes in the 1570s and 80s, displayed in stained glass windows, walls and ceilings designed to represent the local social hierarchy; these displays provide some context for the *Woodsome Panels*.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Tittler, 'Social Aspiration', p. 280.

<sup>32</sup> J. T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1969), p.97.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> For example the display of coats of arms at Adlington Hall, Cheshire and the heraldic frieze in the Great Chamber at Gilling Castle, Yorkshire: Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and Gentry Communities in Shakespeare's England', in *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2014), p. 191 and 194.

The right hand reverse-side panel of *The Woodsome Panels* contains a depiction of the branches of a tree hung with family portraits (Fig. 4:10). Like other portraits which feature such images, this is reminiscent of the familiar Tree of Jesse representations in churches and elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Rising from the body of Arthur, John's father, the tree ascends to depict John himself with his siblings, and above them some of John and Dorothy's fifteen children.<sup>36</sup> When the two outside panels were closed, the 'tree of Jesse' panel would have been viewed beside the sixty-six coats of arms, a conjunction presumably intended to suggest a close association between Yorkshire's nobles and the Kaye family, the whole sanctioned by references to the Old Testament story of Jesse, father of David, from whom Christ was supposed to have descended. Like the Pytts family, the Kayes rose from yeomen ranks, for whom claims to long lineage were exaggerated and it was only with John's father Arthur that their fortunes and social prospects rose through his shrewd financial management.<sup>37</sup> Dorothy in fact had greater claims to high status than her husband being the daughter and granddaughter of local gentry families and their marriage was probably intended to advance the Kayes in the social hierarchy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The Bible, Isaiah 11.1.

<sup>36</sup> Tittler, 'Social Aspiration', p. 185.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 190.



Figure 4:9 English School, *The Woodsome Panels*, 1567, oil on panel, The Tolson Museum, Kirklees, Yorkshire, (detail)



Figure 4:10 English School, *The Woodsome Panels*, 1567, oil on panel, The Tolson Museum, Kirklees, Yorkshire, (detail of 'Tree of Jesse' panel)

## Case Study 2 :The Cornwall portrait

Unlike the Kayes, the Cornwalls from Burford on the Shropshire/Herefordshire borders were an ancient and senior family, closely associated with noble families across the country who could genuinely lay claim to long lineage.<sup>39</sup> The enormous triptych portrait in memory of Richard (d.1568) and Janet (d.1547) and their son Edmund Cornwall ( d.1585) was commissioned by their younger son Thomas and stands near the altar on the north wall in St Mary's Church, Burford, Shropshire (Fig. 4:3, detail Fig. 4:13).<sup>40</sup> Although painted only twenty one years after the Woodsome Panels, this impressive and complex work demonstrates an evolution of style and accomplishment, being executed by a named artist who displays the ability to combine heraldry with detailed, expressive and naturalistic depictions of his sitters and beautifully rendered details of costume and jewelry.

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<sup>39</sup> Alan Harding, 'Cornwall, Sir Thomas (1472/74-1537), of Burford, Salop.', (1982) [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/cornwall-sir-thomas-147274-1537>, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>40</sup> British Listed Buildings, 'Church of St Mary, a Grade I Listed Building in Burford, Shropshire' (2017), [<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101383422-church-of-st-mary-burford#.WRxa9oWcE2x>, Accessed May 2017]; thanks to Mr Ray Morris, churchwarden St Mary's Church, Burford, Shropshire for access to this portrait.



Figure 4:11 Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornwall Family*, 1588, oil on panel, St Mary's Church Burford, Shropshire (detail)

The triptych doors open to reveal three full-length, almost life-sized portraits of Edmund Cornwall dressed in Greenwich armour standing to the right of his parents in the upper section, in a style reminiscent of aristocratic portraits of the same date. Below this is a two hundred and twenty one metre tall cadaver of Edmund lying horizontally in the lower section (Fig. 4:13). The standing figures assume attitudes of prayer, while the interior of the lowest panels opens to reveal small kneeling 'donor portraits' of Edmund's brother Thomas Cornwall and his wife Ann, kneeling at prayer tables, the whole portrait is dotted with pious texts. The combination of religious content with the heraldic imagery strengthens the sense that hereditary virtue was inextricably linked to inherited piety. This theme is developed by the doors, the left of which opens to reveal two panels on its inside, each containing nine armorial shields and a full coat of arms (perhaps those of Janet Cornwall) (Fig. 4:14) while



the right hand wing opens to reveal a similar pattern of shields and coat of arms of the Cornwall family.



Figure 4:12 Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornwall Family*, (detail), 1588, oil on panel, St Mary's Church, Burford, Shropshire (Detail)



Figure 4:13 Triptych memorial to the Cornwall family (open)

The sacred context of the parish church in which this impressive monumental portrait was displayed is important, surrounded as it still is by a series of medieval and sixteenth century monuments to the family, all with shields and heraldic devices. It is the repetition of colours, patterns and heraldic beasts in the shields across the monuments and portrait which combines with textual elements to detail the illustrious families from whom descent is claimed, creating a carefully constructed account of long lineage, bringing together past and present generations, sanctified by their place in church. This location would have powerfully affected the reading of this portrait and ensured regular communication between past, present and future generations, peers, neighbours and household.<sup>41</sup>

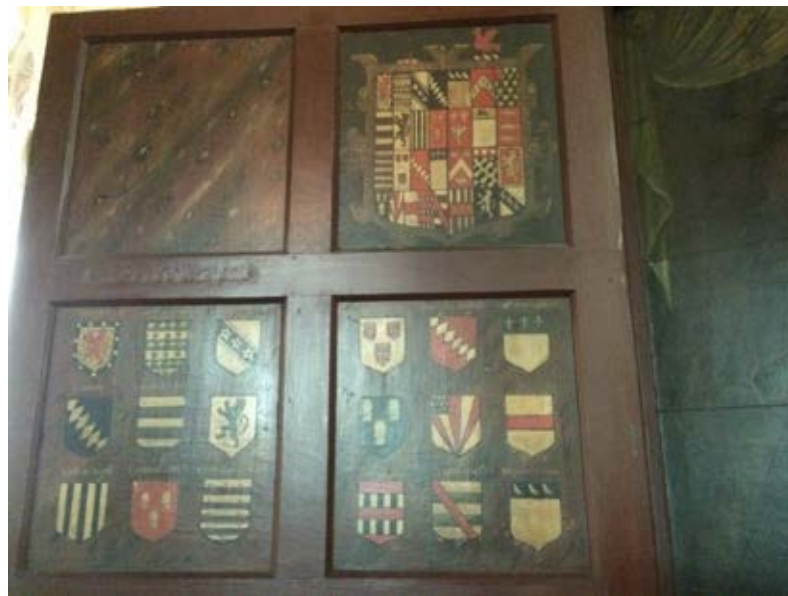


Figure 4:14 Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornewall Family* (open), 1588, oil on panel, St Mary's Church, Burford, Shropshire (detail of interior left door)

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<sup>41</sup> Cust, 'William Dugdale and the Honour Politics', p. 97.





Figure 4:15 Melchior Salabos, *Triptych Memorial to the Cornwall Family*, 1588, oil on panel, St Mary's Church, Burford, Shropshire (detail of exterior right door closed)

The status of the Kaye and Cornwall families was clearly different, the Kayes were aspirant though wealthy yeomen, keen to expand their economic base, while the Cornwalls were senior gentry, whose lands spread across several counties and the quality of the two families' portraits demonstrates the differences in their status and purchasing power. Comparison between them has drawn attention to the relationship between the status of their subjects, evolving styles of portraiture and the abilities and vocabularies of the artists they commissioned. It has also stressed differences in the contexts in which they were viewed; the Kayes in the domestic space of their home while the Cornwalls' was placed in the sacred context of their church which reinforced the links between sanctified space and inherited status. Despite their differences, both portraits share common features and depict a moment when patrons combine the traditional language of heraldry with an emerging emphasis on physiognomic likeness. The next section explores the ways in which the evolving use of naturalistic style developed which depended not on heraldry to signify high status but on the

use of elaborate landscapes, flowing fabrics, a widening range of colour, and gesture to signify family virtue and high status.

## b. Naturalism and ‘civility’

By the 1640s heraldry as a signifier of long lineage gradually disappeared from family portraits, though not necessarily from other material objects, to be replaced by the flowing styles of artists like Van Dyck whose portraits stressed posture, refined manners and bodily demeanour as the attributes of high status.<sup>42</sup> Anna Bryson sees this demeanour as a code of manners which reflected moral worth and personal qualities which by the mid seventeenth century contrasted ‘civility’ with ‘bestiality’ or animal instinct.<sup>43</sup> The refined manners which underpinned notions of elite behaviour were techniques of self-presentation and included dress, gesture and gait, sensitivity to others, grace and allurements.<sup>44</sup> These somewhat elusive characteristics are reproduced in family portraits where the posture, gestures and clothes of parents and children exemplify civility, sometimes visualised as a kind of ‘psychic balance’ where status was performed, fostering a sense of spiritual distinction designed to set the elite apart from those they felt themselves ‘destined’ to rule.<sup>45</sup> Henry Peacham advised his readers in 1634 that:

There is no one thing that setteth a fairer stamp upon nobility than evenness of carriage, and care of our reputation ... by gate, laughter and apparel a man is known what he is, wherefore I call it the crown of good parts and loadstone of regard. The principal means to preserve it is temperance and that moderation of the mind, wherewith as a bridle we curb and break our rank and unruly passions, keeping as the Caspian Sea, our selves ever at one height without ebb or reflux.<sup>46</sup>

This section of the chapter will examine how family portraits became sites for the display of such qualities and are distinguished by fluid brushwork, greater naturalism, figures

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<sup>42</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, pp. 20-47.

<sup>43</sup> Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 108; Anna Bryson, ‘The Rhetoric of Status: Gesture, Demeanour and the Image of the Gentleman in Sixteenth - and Seventeenth-Century England’, in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1990), p. 149.

<sup>44</sup> Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>45</sup> Malcolm R. Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 204.

<sup>46</sup> George Stuart Gordon (ed), Henry Peacham, *Compleat Gentleman 1634*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p.221.

moulded by shadow and flowing colourful costumes. Iconography depicting long lineage was not totally abandoned but was replaced instead with details which idealised family unity and continuity through numbers of children and assured images of family groups in confident and relaxed poses with a rich range of iconographic details and gesture. As in the earlier period, physiognomic likeness, including facial resemblance and near identical costumes stress family continuity as seen for example in the Ottley family group of a slightly earlier period (Fig. 1:5).

Peacham's 'temperance and moderation of the mind' is reflected in a new range of connecting gestures between family members, which replace the rigid figures and formal spatial arrangement of the earlier portraits. These sometimes suggest a new easy intimacy or affection between them, seen for example in the linked hands of husband and wife in the Salusbury family portrait (Fig. 4:16).



Figure 4:16 Unknown Artist, *The Salusbury Family*, 1643, private collection

Changes in the depiction of demeanour were accompanied by important changes in the composition of portraits, as groups pose not in the inside of the home or studio, but outdoors, encouraging the viewer to contemplate families' fashionable taste in garden and

landscape design and their ownership of land, still seen as a prerequisite of high status.

Gardens were often augmented by classical sculpture or drapery and frequently accompanied by dramatic and colourful skies which heighten the sense of drama, suggesting turbulent weather which highlights the sitters' importance and sense of immediacy. Sometimes, as in the case of the Bagot portraits, these scenes may have been versions of reality (Figs 3:6 and 3:8). Such theatrical outdoor scenes framed the portraits in a new way, drawing attention to the ever present association between land, property and inheritance but more pertinently, reflecting the ideals of civility where refined taste, orderly management and control of estates served to reveal appropriate skills in the management of public office and the maintenance of political influence.<sup>47</sup>

These elite values were gendered and included, for husbands, displays of power and influence in public life, and personal qualities which encompassed justice, education, temperance, mercy, faith, domestic affection and good household care.<sup>48</sup> Wives continued to be assigned private domestic roles with the creation of a well-ordered domestic world with care of children their primary duty and their qualities included sexual propriety and prudence while their bodies remain sites for the display of family wealth.<sup>49</sup> Like their husbands, civility for wives was closely connected to the expression of authority and the prerogatives of rank and wives were expected to understand the importance of positioning their children in the correct social environment, distinguishing them from lower ranked families, seen for example in the idealised classical costumes of the Bagot children (Figs 3:6 and 3:8).<sup>50</sup>

The 1636 portrait of Sir Francis Ottley and his family (Fig. 1:5) demonstrates the new painterly styles and language of civility with a rich, nuanced colour palette, looser

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<sup>47</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England*, p 51.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* p 17; for image see Robert Brathwaite's cover of the *English Gentleman and the English Gentlewoman* (Fig.2:6)

<sup>50</sup> Mendelson, 'The Civility of Women' p. 113.

brushstrokes and more realistic use of perspective, drapery and modelling of the figures compared for example with the Aston portrait of about the same date (Fig. 6:3).<sup>51</sup> The Ottleys display unity and harmony through the apparently affectionate and protective gestures of the parents and, rather than a formal heraldic element, lineage is suggested by the ease and confidence with which the parents embrace their children. The gendering of this portrait is interesting, with the mother apparently appointing her son as heir by placing her hand on his shoulder, while Sir Francis seems to enclose his daughter with his arm, such gestures perhaps signifying that the parents shared in the enterprise of raising their children and protecting their status. The family is composed and reserved but also relaxed and easy with their wealth, their steady gazes, confident poses and classical surroundings suggest a life of grace and civility.<sup>52</sup> Sir Francis's masculinity, military achievements and knightly status are emphasised here where glistening silks and pristine lace replace the Greenwich armour of the earlier Cornwall portrait to display the family's wealth. The sword also draws attention to what Ann Hughes identifies as defining elements in the performance of masculinity in the period of the civil war, physical bravery in the defence of honour.<sup>53</sup> The pillars and balustrade reflect the influence of Van Dyck and his acolytes and may also have functioned as a kind of moral commentary, framing father and son with the conventional masculine qualities of fortitude, strength and independence, as distinct from the drapes on the female side suggesting softer feminine virtues.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Sir Francis Ottley was one of the leading royalists in Shropshire during the Civil War: Stephen Wright, 'Ottley, Sir Francis (1600/01–1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20940>, accessed 10 May 2017]; Peter Troueil is a little-known portrait painter working in a similar same style as Cornelius Johnson, attentive to meticulous detail, especially in his depiction of lace work, The Berger Collection, Peter Troueil (active ca. 1636) [[http://www.bergercollection.org/?id=5&artist\\_id=89](http://www.bergercollection.org/?id=5&artist_id=89), Accessed May 2017].

<sup>52</sup> Smuts, *Court Culture*, p. 206.

<sup>53</sup> Ann Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution*, (New York ; London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 90-91.

<sup>54</sup> Susan Foister, 'Sixteenth-Century English Portraiture and the Idea of the Classical', in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain 1550-1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 164.

Other family portraits dating from the second quarter of the seventeenth century echo the style of the Ottley group, idealising both the appearance and demeanour of sitters. Among these is the well-known portrait of the Capel family by Cornelius Johnson of 1640. (Fig. 1:4). The portrait depicts Arthur Capel, 1st Baron Capel (1604-1649) (seated left) born at Hadham Hall, Hertfordshire with his wife Theodosia.<sup>55</sup> Arthur Capel was raised to the peerage in 1641, the prospect of which may have prompted the commissioning of the portrait.<sup>56</sup> This work exemplifies not only the styles of the 'New Netherlanders' with naturalistic modelling of the figures, a wide colour palette and exquisite brushwork, but also the new ways of depicting high status. This includes an emphasis on the family as a unified group with the two oldest sons, Arthur and (either Charles or Henry) apparently in poses of casual and intimate familiarity with their father. Heal and Holmes point out that the relationship between a father and his heir was important, ensuring an uncontroversial transfer of inheritance between generations, noting that 'Model fathers inspired predictable loyalty in affectionate sons', something seemingly illustrated here.<sup>57</sup> The boys' affection for, and in the case of the younger son, literal physical dependence on their father, helps to bolster the impression of him as the kind of just, temperate, affectionate man whose domestic life fitted him for public service.<sup>58</sup> This intimate family exchange is echoed in the pose of Sir Thomas Lucy and his relationship with his daughter (Fig.2:15).

Sir Arthur and his wife assume correctly gendered poses in high backed brass studded chairs which suggest their seniority and present Sir Arthur as a confident patriarch commanding the group with his height and serious, but elegant, black doublet. He was in

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<sup>55</sup> Ronald Hutton, 'Capel, Arthur, first Baron Capel of Hadham (1604–1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4583>, accessed 27 April 2017]

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* See also: <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw00433/The-Capel-Family#sitter>, Accessed May 2017]

<sup>57</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England*, p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1.

reality an exceptionally tall man described as: ‘prim, sober, and pious, with a rigid devotion to duty and a profound attachment to the Sacraments in the Anglican church’, qualities which define him as ‘ideal’ in terms of the model high status patriarch, combining piety with correct demeanour.<sup>59</sup> His wife is also depicted in the ideal feminine pose beside him, her gaze and half turned body leading the viewer’s eye towards her husband, at the same time appearing to fulfil her ‘correct’ role as mother, with a child on her knee. The couple’s oldest daughter, Mary stands demurely on the female side of the portrait, while her sister Elizabeth offers her younger brother a flower as if indicating her future nurturing role. Their brothers, near their father also suggest their future roles, young Arthur’s position as the family heir is clearly indicated both by the large hat he holds under his right arm and by his father’s hat which hovers above his head on the table behind him as if waiting to drop on his head.

The family’s wealth is indicated both by their sumptuous costumes and the beautifully laid out and meticulously painted formal garden of their home at Little Hadham, Hertfordshire, which frames the figures of the two girls.<sup>60</sup> Gardens were indicators of high status signifying land ownership, great wealth and fashionable taste and parks and gardens are depicted as backgrounds in a number of post 1637 portraits including those of the Bagot, Lucy, Newdigate and Cotton families.<sup>61</sup> The apparent comfort and ease with which these families assert their dominance of the land is an elegant expression of their entitlement to control it. Johnson has created an impression of the wealth of the Capels through the richness of their costume and garden without ostentation or vulgarity.

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<sup>59</sup> Hutton, ‘Capel, Arthur’

<sup>60</sup> National Gallery, *The Capel Family*

<sup>61</sup> Unknown Artist, *Lettice Newdigate aged two*, 1606, Private Collection; Cornelius Johnson (attrib.), *The Family of Thomas Lucy*, 1625, oil on canvas, Charlecote Park, Warwickshire; Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, *Lady Anne Cotton, née Hoghton, with Her Son, John (1615–1689)*, oil on canvas. 212cms x 142cms. Madingley Hall, University of Cambridge; John Michael Wright. *Lady Mary Bagot and Granddaughter Mary, Later Lady Parker*, oil on canvas, 118 x 125.5 cm, Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage; John Michael Wright. *Portrait of Mrs Salesbury with her Grandchildren Edward and Elizabeth Bagot*, 1675-6, oil paint on canvas, Tate; John Michael Wright. *The Family of Sir Robert Vyner*, 1673, oil on canvas, 144.8 cms x 195.6 cms, NPG, London; Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England*, p. 224; the Capels were highly influential in the development of English garden design and gardening as a leisure activity was considered an appropriate gentlemanly occupation



The Capel portrait displays clear links with Van Dyck's depiction of the family of Charles I, the so called 'great peece' (Fig. 4:17). Both the fathers dominate these portraits by their height and authoritative bearing. Their sense of superiority is reinforced by their wives' gaze towards them and the presence of babies which suggest both their potency and their wives' fecundity and fidelity. In both portraits the children imitate their parents' gendered roles with an air of easy affection through posture and gesture. In the case of the royal portrait, however, heredity is confirmed by the proximity of the crown and sceptre to the young prince's head rather than a simple hat and the landscape of Whitehall in the background replaces the garden. The borrowing of elements from Van Dyck's highly esteemed works presented aspiring families like the Capels with the opportunity to align themselves with the taste of the aristocracy.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, p. 2.



Figure 4:17 Sir Anthony Van Dyck, *Charles I and Henrietta Maria with their two eldest children, Prince Charles and Princess Mary*, 1631-2, oil on canvas, East Gallery, Buckingham Palace, Royal Collection Trust/,© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2016

Van Dyck and his followers idealized the bodies of their aristocratic sitters, depicting them, as Smuts claims: ‘not as warriors ... but as a caste set apart by intellectual distinction, spiritual refinement and instinctive elegance’.<sup>63</sup> This was facilitated among other techniques, by the artist’s use of flattering elongation of bodies and hands, which exaggerated and refined their gestures and is evident in many of the portraits of his provincial imitators including those of the Salusbury (Fig. 4:16), Ottley (Fig. 1:5), Cotton (4:18) and Vyner (Fig. 1:7) families and is an important element in expressing grace and refinement. There are especially important hand gestures in the Cotton and Vyner portraits where the two fathers use their hands in a graceful, open handed gesture with an elegant contra postural turn of their bodies,

<sup>63</sup> Smuts, *Court Culture*, p. 203.

apparently designed to ‘introduce’ their family and estate to the viewer in a proprietorial gesture, while simultaneously extending their reach towards the viewer. This gesture is used in a number of other portraits of the period, normally of men, where it appears to have a specific meaning.<sup>64</sup> John Bulwer, writing in the middle of the seventeenth century on the language of gesture and the human body as a vehicle of communication had much to say about this gesture which he believed originated in the traditions of formal oratory and particularly the art of rhetoric.<sup>65</sup> In particular, in the section titled ‘The 26 Canons of Rhetoricians touching the Artificial Managing of the Hand in Speaking’ he describes the following gesture:

The gentle and well-ordered hand thrown forth by a moderate projection, the fingers unfolding themselves in the motion, and the shoulders a little slackened, affords a familiar force to any plain continued speech or uniform discourse; and much graceth any matter that requires to be handled with a more lofty style, which we would fain fully present in a more gorgeous excess of words.

The comliness of this action (which best suits with them who remove and shift their standing) appears herein, that by this emanation of the arm and delivery of gesture, speech is so well pronounced and poured forth, that it seems to flow out of the hand.<sup>66</sup>

This gesture clearly references classical humanism and its associations with the ideals of statesmanship in the public sphere and conveys the ‘psychic balance’ and elite manners expected of men aspiring to high status.<sup>67</sup> Robert Vyner was a member of a family of the middling sort who made a huge fortune from banking and allied activities in the City of London becoming Lord Mayor in 1674 and was typical of wealthy, aspirational men anxious

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<sup>64</sup> For example: Sir Peter Lely, *Heneage Finch, 1st Earl of Nottingham, Lord Keeper*, 1666, oil on canvas, Kenwood House, London.

<sup>65</sup> Graham Richards, ‘Bulwer, John (bap. 1606, d. 1656)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3934>, accessed 27 April 2017]

<sup>66</sup> John Bulwer, *Chirologia, or the Naturall Language of the Hand*, (London: 1644) [[https://archive.org/details/gu\\_chirolgianat00gent](https://archive.org/details/gu_chirolgianat00gent) Accessed September 2015].

<sup>67</sup> John Cotton (Fig. 4:18) was a member of an eminent and educated family and evidently a classicist, serving as MP for Huntingdon, where his speeches were notable for their classical allusions: E. R. Edwards, *Cotton, John I (1621-1702), of Conington, Hunts. and Cotton House, Westminster*, *The History of Parliament online* [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/cotton-john-i-1621-1702> Accessed May 2017].

to adopt the appearance and manners of civil society.<sup>68</sup> Here as elsewhere, entitlement to elite status with its privileges and power were presented as naturally acquired and confidently displayed.



Figure 4:18 Sir Peter Lely, *Sir John Cotton and his family*, 1660, Manchester City Art Gallery

## Chapter Four: conclusion

This chapter has covered a period of one hundred and thirty years from the second half of the sixteenth to the late seventeenth century and charted the central concern which provincial families had with their status and its representation. It has drawn attention to the complex relationship between the changing status of subjects, the mutable nature of the family and the evolving nature of representation and artistic style. Other preoccupations of great concern to provincial families and evident in their portraits, are questions of piety and spirituality, subjects which will be explored in the following chapter.

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<sup>68</sup> G. E. Aylmer, 'Vyner, Sir Robert, baronet (1631–1688)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2014 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28318>, accessed 27 April 2017].

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PORTRAITS AND PIETY

#### Introduction

In sixteenth and seventeenth-century England the practice of faith was central to family life, establishing daily, weekly and annual household routines and providing the context for all family events such as birth, baptism, marriage and death and calendrical events like Christmas and Easter.<sup>1</sup> This chapter engages with the relationship between family portraits and piety, demonstrating how this provided a key mechanism through which gentle families could exhibit and enhance their faith, articulate confessional identity, foster domestic piety and act as exemplars to inspire and instruct future generations.<sup>2</sup>

This was a time when marriage and the family unit were controlled both by the church and society, when William Gouge among others taught that the family ‘was a little Church, and a little common-wealth’.<sup>3</sup> This chapter considers the changing visual vocabulary that reflected the relationship between gentry families and their faith. Portraits suggesting faith which were commissioned to hang in domestic spaces, reinforce the idea of the household as the locus of pious education and behaviour, taking their place among a host of other domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (eds), *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Bronwen Wilson, ‘The Renaissance Portrait: From Resemblance to Representation’, in *The Renaissance World*, ed. by J. Jeffries Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 452-480; Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Harry Berger Jr, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000); Tarnya Cooper, ‘Frail Flesh, as in a Glass’: The Portrait as an Immortal Presence in Early Modern England and Wales’, in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. by Mary Rogers (Hampshire and Vermont: Ashgate, 2000), p. 197; Tara Hamling and Richard Williams, *Art Re-Formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-13; Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Alexandra Walsham, ‘Holy Families: The Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited’, in *Religion and the Household*, ed. by John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham (Rochester: Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2014), pp. 122-61.

<sup>3</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treaties*, (London: Printed by John Haviland for William Bladen, 1622).

objects and decorations which also declared the religiosity of the home and family.<sup>4</sup> This chapter draws attention to the contrasting ways in which different pictorial repertoires were employed to describe families' differing confessional positions, either Catholic or Protestant. This polarity contrasts with evidence from textual sources which suggests that most families lived on a continuum between the two extremes, accommodating and adapting to religious change and tolerating divergent faith practices.

Portraits often conflate social and religious ideals within the family; patriarchy in particular is often closely identified with piety and depicted as the 'correct' form of family governance. Advice literature, for example, stressed the requirement for household heads to become 'godly patriarchs' whose care should be for the souls in his family, an idea articulated by the influential theologian and Church of England clergyman William Perkins, who claimed that the first duty of the father of the household was:<sup>5</sup>

To be the principal agent, director and furtherer of the worship of God within his family ... And this he doth partly by prayer for and with his household and partly by instructing them in the Holy Scriptures and in the grounds of religion that they may grow in knowledge and reap benefit by the public Ministries.<sup>6</sup>

Portraits frequently reflect this orthodoxy with prominence given to the male head of the family who was also viewed as its spiritual head, something seen in the Towneley and Chorley portraits (Figs 5:3 and 5:12). However, there are important exceptions to this rule and as will be argued in relation to the Markham family portrait (Fig. 5:17) portraits sometimes represent maternal faith where wives are depicted as conduits of family faith, giving them specific authority within the household, a theme developed further in Chapter 6.

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<sup>4</sup> Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010); Tara Hamling, 'To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household', *Art History*, 30 (2007), pp. 170-97; Tara Hamling and Richard Williams, *Art Re-Formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Newcastle Cambridge Scholars, 2007); Alexandra Walsham, 'Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory, and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 69 (2016), pp. 566-616.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie or, A short survey of the manner of erecting and ordering a family according to the scriptures* (London, 1609), p. 164.

Household prayers and devotions provided the opportunity for parents to instruct children and foster their faith.<sup>7</sup> The well-known portrait of Sir Thomas More and his family, the original of which is lost, exists in a number of sketches and later copies, including (Fig. 5:1) which shows members of his household engaged in family devotions. It includes various aids to assist family members in their task, such as the prayer stool in the foreground, the *prie dieux* to the right, books and the prayerful and meditative poses of the family. While prominence is given to the male heads of the family, female and junior members share in the communal act.<sup>8</sup> The domestic context of this sketch is evidenced by familiar objects like jugs, candlesticks and plates which, coupled with the attentive ways in which the family interact with one another, is a carefully contrived image of domestic piety and unity which sanctifies the group.

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<sup>7</sup> Felicity Heal, and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 353; Ian Green, 'Varieties of Domestic Devotion in Early Modern English Protestantism', in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (Farnham and Vermont: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 9-31.

<sup>8</sup> Shearer West, *Portraiture, Oxford History of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 108; National Portrait Gallery, *The Portrait of Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants* (2017), [<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01734/Sir-Thomas-More-his-father-his-household-and-his-descendants?search=ap&subj=234%3BBooks+and+libraries&rNo=5#description>, Accessed May 2017].





Figure 5:1 Hans Holbein the Younger, *Study for the Family Portrait of Sir Thomas More*, c. 1527, pen and brush in black on top of chalk sketch, Kupferstichkabinett, Öffentliche Kunstmuseum, Basel

The effect which the long process of reforming the English church had on the religious practices of individuals and families has been a subject of intense academic interest in recent years and provides the backdrop to this chapter.<sup>9</sup> Its consequences for the country's material culture, including portraiture, were profound and have also been the subject of recent

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia : The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation', in *The Stenton Lecture* (Reading: University of Reading, 1985 ); Patrick Collinson, Anthony Fletcher, and Peter Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain : Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars : Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2005); Tara Hamling, 'Living with the Bible in Post-Reformation England: The Materiality of Text, Image and Object in Domestic Life', in *Religion and the Household*, ed. Charlotte Methuen, Alexandra Walsham and John Doran (Rochester: Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2014), pp. 210-39; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Ethan H. Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation' : Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); J. T. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England* (1984); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750, Oxford Studies in Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Houlbrooke, 'The Puritan Death-Bed, c 1560-c.1660', in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700*, ed. by Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 122-44; David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist, (eds), *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, (Leeds: Maney, 2003).



studies which have pointed to important relationships between the family, confessional identities and material culture.<sup>10</sup>

The complexity and diversity of religious practice and belief between and within families occasionally led to intergenerational conflict which fractured the carefully contrived illusion of unity in most portraits. The portrait of the Tasburgh family, for example, presents a united front to the world while in reality Sir John Tasburgh and his wife Lettice were strongly opposed in their faith positions, he was a staunch Protestant while his wife retained her strong catholic position (Fig. 0:2). Their children were similarly divided, some, including Charles their oldest son, followed their mother's faith.<sup>11</sup> Nesta Evans draws attention to a letter from Sir John about his wife and eldest daughter Penelope's recusancy where he protests that he had not been angry with his daughter for her failure to attend church or to 'her mother for so persuading her', claiming that he had only used 'gentle and kind persuasions begotten of a sincere, true affection.'<sup>12</sup> Despite his protestations of gentleness, on another occasion Sir John is reported to have threatened Penelope that 'he would cut the tongue out of her head if she spoke one word more in defence of her religion.'<sup>13</sup> Her father's threats were

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<sup>10</sup> Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, pp. 93-119; Hamling and Williams, *Art Re-Formed*; Tara Hamling, 'To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household', (2007); Tarnya Cooper, 'The Enchantment of the Familiar Face: Portraits as Domestic Objects in Elizabethan and Jacobean England', in *Everyday Objects*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, (England and USA: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 156-77; Tarnya Cooper 'Predestined Lives? Portraiture and Religious Belief in England and Wales, 1560-1620', in Hamling and Williams, *Art Re-Formed*., pp.49-62; Robert Tittler, 'Portraiture and Memory Amongst the Middling Elites in Post-Reformation England', in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, ed. by Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (Surrey, England and Vermont, U.S.A: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 37-57; Margaret Aston, 'Gods, Saints, and Reformers: Portraiture and Protestant England', in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 181-220; Gaimster and Gilchrist, (eds), *The Archaeology of Reformation*, p. 3; Cooper 'Predestined Lives?', p. 49; Alexandra Walsham, 'Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory, and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 69 (2016), pp. 566-616.

<sup>11</sup> A. M. Mimardi re, 'Tasburgh, John (c.1576-1629), of Beaconsfield and Hawridge, Bucks.; Later of Flixton Abbey, Suff.' (1981) [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/tasburgh-john-1576-1629>, Accessed May 2017].

<sup>12</sup> Nesta Evans, 'The Tasburghs of South Elmham: The Rise and Fall of a Suffolk Gentry Family', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 34 (1980), p. 274.

<sup>13</sup> Mimardi re, *Tasburgh, John*.

empty however, and his worse fears were confirmed when Penelope became a nun and entered the convent at Louvain.<sup>14</sup>

While some images were considered contentious among certain religious groups, protestant clergy like William Perkins made it clear that portraits were acceptable if they served civil or commemorative uses and avoided the danger of becoming objects of veneration. In this he echoed the Elizabethan Proclamation of 1560 which allowed the setting up of sculpted monuments in church if they were intended to have a memorial rather than religious function.<sup>15</sup> However some portraits which would have ventured dangerously close to the line of acceptability in an earlier period were acceptable a hundred years later under King Charles II. An example being the ‘votive portrait’ of Sir Henry Bedingfield of 1661 from Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk which depicts Sir Henry and his wife, with their eight children in devotional poses sheltered under the arms and gown of the Virgin Mary (Fig. 5:2). The Bedingfield family was staunchly Catholic though loyal to the crown through several generations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Evans, ‘The Tasburghs of South Elmham’, p. 274.

<sup>15</sup> Aston, ‘Gods, Saints, and Reformers’, p. 184; Jonathan Finch, ‘A Reformation of Meaning: Commemoration and Remembering the Dead in the Parish Church, 1450-1640’, in *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, ed. by David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist, (Leeds: Maney, 2003), p. 443.

<sup>16</sup> National Trust, *The History of Oxburgh Hall, National Trust*: [<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/oxburgh-hall/features/history-of-oxburgh-hall>, Accessed May 2016]



Figure 5:2 Unknown artist, *Sir Henry Bedingfield and his family*, c. 1661, Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk, National Trust Collection, reproduced by kind permission of the National Trust.

This portrait, and others like it such as the Towneley and Markham family portraits (see below), which contain specific catholic elements raise questions about the spiritual purpose of such images and whether they had a part to play in household devotions, perhaps serving meditative or educational functions or even acting as aids to prayer.<sup>17</sup> It seems likely that this was the case although evidence for such practices rarely exists. However, it will be suggested that in the case of the Saltonstall group (Chapter Six case study 2) that the portrait might depict the room in which family devotions were held and may have played an active part in family prayer and reading. Tarnya Cooper notes that even for individuals committed to protestant reforms, reliance upon images as aids to prayer may have been common,

<sup>17</sup> Richard Williams, 'A Catholic Sculpture in Elizabethan England: Sir Thomas Tresham's Reredos at Rushton Hall', *Architectural History*, 44 (2001), pp. 221-27.

perhaps especially so where they were hung in domestic contexts.<sup>18</sup> In particular it is probable that portraits which recall death through *memento mori* symbols were designed to invoke the need for repentance and humility before God, prompting pious meditation and reflection.

The small group of portraits which have a triptych form may possibly have had a number of devotional functions in addition to their obvious reference to fifteenth and early sixteenth-century altarpieces with their association with devotional practices and reference to the holy family.<sup>19</sup> Jane Eade draws attention to the possibility that the side wings of such portraits might have been constructed to open and close on specific significant occasions.<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to imagine the powerful effect which would have been achieved in the case of the Cornwall portrait (Chapter Four pt. 2) by alternately displaying the doors open, with their display of heraldry on the inside, with their closed version displaying the twelve apostles on the outside (Figs 4:14 and 4:15). It is possible to speculate whether small rituals involving such portraits might have bridged the gap between public and private devotional practices.

The three case studies which follow have been selected for their specific emphasis on family piety and reflect some of the themes outlined above, including the notion of the ‘sanctified family’, the development of specific catholic and protestant visual languages and the place of portraiture in the transmission of familial faith. The first case study examines the Towneley family portrait arguing that it was designed to express the family’s suffering in the face of religious persecution, while simultaneously offering consolation and hope through their steadfast collective faith through several generations. In contrast, the second case study

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<sup>18</sup> Tanya Cooper, ‘Predestined Lives? Portraiture and Religious Belief in England and Wales, 1560-1620’, in *Art Re-Formed: Reassessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, ed. Tara Hamling and Richard Williams, (2007), p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Eade, ‘The Triptych Portrait in England 1585-1646’, *The British Art Journal*, Vol. 6, pp. England’, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

focusses on the portrait of the Presbyterian Chorley family which conflates their social, religious and commercial identities. The final case study draws attention to the curious portrait of the Markham family, where the emphasis is on ‘maternal faith’ in a family divided along confessional lines.

## Case Study 1: A catholic family: The Towneley portraits



Figure 5:3 English School, *John Towneley and his family*, 1595-1601, oil on panel, Towneley Hall Art Gallery, Burnley, Lancashire

### i. John and Mary Towneley and their family

In 1590 Queen Elizabeth's secretary of state Lord Burghley commissioned a large vellum map of the county of Lancashire showing churches and chapels together with the names of their associated gentry. (Fig. 5:4).<sup>21</sup> The map was designed to assist members of the Privy Council to enforce conformity on the large numbers of Catholics in the county.<sup>22</sup> Some

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Gillow, 'Lord Burghley's Map of Lancashire in 1590 : With Notes on the Designated Manorial Lords, Biographical and Genealogical, and Brief Histories of Their Estates Traced Down to the Present Day', ed. by William Cecil Baron Burghley (London: Privately printed for the Society of the Arden press, 1907).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1.



names were marked with a cross signifying that these were men who were particularly uncompromising and slow to adopt the new church doctrines. Among the ‘obstinate’ recusant gentlemen marked out for this special attention was John Towneley, (known as ‘of Gray’s Inn’) of Towneley Hall near Burnley.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 5:4 Lord Burley's Map of Lancashire, 1590, (detail, John Towneley's name with a cross is in the centre)

This case study proposes that in response to their persecution and to demonstrate faithfulness to the old religion, two successive generations of the Towneley family commissioned portraits of their families. The earliest, *John Towneley and his family*, was commissioned from an unknown artist around a decade after Burghley's map, in c.1601 (Fig. 5:3) and returned to Towneley Hall following a sale in 1939, where it now hangs.<sup>24</sup> The later

<sup>23</sup> Gillow uses the word ‘obstinate’ in *Ibid.* p.23.

<sup>24</sup> Sale details: Lot 27, Christie, Manson and Woods, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1939 (pencilled notes in the sale catalogue date this portrait to c. 1595).

portrait is of John and his wife Mary Towneley's oldest son Richard (d. 1628), with his wife and family. This portrait was painted around 1620, and sold in the same 1939 sale.

Unfortunately, its current whereabouts is unknown and evidence for its appearance is limited to written descriptions.<sup>25</sup>

This case study draws attention to specific catholic imagery in these two portraits, linking this to the history of the Towneleys and placing the family in the wider context of religious conflict in the period. It stresses the agency which group portraiture had to strengthen cohesion and unify the family in the face of its perceived mistreatment.

Furthermore, as Peter Davidson argues of catholic domestic spaces, portraits may have had a dual confessional function, firstly refusing to deny their faith while simultaneously rejecting the new protestant orders.<sup>26</sup> It is rare to find group portraits spanning two successive generations at this period, although, as an 1835 sketch of the gallery at Towneley Hall shows, the family were enthusiastic commissioners of portraits (Fig. 5:11).

Catholics in England were persecuted for their faith and many were prosecuted and executed for treason between 1535 and 1603 while others like John Towneley were imprisoned and heavily fined.<sup>27</sup> Large quantities of anti-catholic propaganda appeared in England, particularly at times of tension such as the post Armada era of the late 1580s and 1590s, the period when the first Towneley portrait was commissioned. Persecution was transformed into a specific catholic identity which developed its own visual language in portraits, domestic items and furnishing such as Fig. 4:8 the *Tabula Eliensis* at Coughton Court. There is a real sense in which portraits like the Townleys' became important sites of collective identity among the catholic gentry, uniting similar families who found themselves

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<sup>25</sup> Lot 28, Christie, Manson and Woods, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1939.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Davidson, 'Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England', in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England [Electronic Resource]*, ed. by . Ronald Corthall et.al. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 21-22.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) p. 3.



on the wrong side of the law for their faith and taking their place alongside print and text as having both a subversive and persuasive purpose.<sup>28</sup>

Towneley is a township near Burnley in Lancashire from which the family derived its name, allowing its members to claim lineage from the thirteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Mary Towneley was the only surviving child and heir of Sir Richard Towneley (d. 1554), the head of the family and owner of Towneley Hall; in 1557 at the age of fifteen, she married her first cousin once removed, John Towneley.<sup>30</sup> Although Mary's husband was twenty three years older than her, the marriage ensured the succession and provided economic security. The couple had a family of seven daughters and seven sons who are all depicted in the portrait.<sup>31</sup> Their oldest son Richard married Jane Asheton who had five surviving sons and one daughter.<sup>32</sup>

Like many catholic families the Towneleys had kin who were conforming Protestants, most notable was John's half-brother Alexander Nowell, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London.<sup>33</sup> Nowell was among those who unsuccessfully attempted to convert John to Protestantism. Despite their profound differences the half-brothers evidently remained on good terms and in 1577 Nowell secured John's release from prison, and in the following year had custody of his half-brother in London. Despite his persistent refusal to conform or be converted, Nowell's efforts to keep John out of gaol continued into the 1580s.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> J. Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan recusants*, (Manchester, for The Chetham Society, 1947); Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, (London : Cambridge University Press, 1975); Richard Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History*, 1998, 23, pp. 40-70.

<sup>29</sup> Biographical information: Francis Robert Raines, *Visitation of the county palatine of Lancaster, made in the year 1613 by Sir Richard Saint-George*, College of Arms, ed., Chetham Society, old ser. 82, (1871), pp. 61-62.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> The boys were: Richard, John, Christopher, Charles, Thomas and Nicholas, the girls were: Frances, Elizabeth, Margaret, Anne, Mary, Frances (again) and Jennit; *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Raines, *Visitation*.

<sup>33</sup> Stanford Lehmberg, 'Nowell, Alexander (c.1516/17–1602)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20378>, accessed 16 May 2017].

<sup>34</sup> Raines, *Visitation of the county palatine of Lancaster*.

The portrait of John Towneley and his family, at a hundred and three by ninety centimetres, is a relatively small portrait in oil on board with a colour palette familiar from other vernacular portraits of the period, limited to russet and ochre earth pigments augmented with black, white and flesh tones (Fig.5:3). The high quantity of heraldic detail suggests that the artist may have been trained in a regional school of heraldry and contrasts with simpler treatment of the figures which are distinguished by lack of shadowing or perspective, although an effort has been made to give the faces individuality and expression.

The portrait is composed of three horizontal bands, each of which has a different function but still relates closely to the others. The top section depicts two vines which enter the frame from right and left. The one on the right has green leaves and bright red grapes or berries, the branches of which are hung with Mary Towneley's coats of arms surmounted by her family's crest, a Saracen's head. The vine which enters from the left side of the frame has black grapes and is hung with the shields of John's ancestors and is topped with his family crest of a tethered falcon. At the centre of the portrait hangs a large shield with twelve quarterings and the arms of both sides of the couple's families; the repetition of colour and pattern recalling their claims to a distinguished past.

Beneath this shield and hovering above a crucifix is a scroll bearing the motto 'virtute decet, non sanguine niti' translated: 'by virtue not by blood is honour proceeding'.<sup>35</sup> Contemporary audiences would have understood this to be a dialogue on the merits of religious virtue versus those of lineage. The heads of catholic families took a particularly keen interest in genealogy, perhaps, suggests Richard Cust, because their religion barred them from public office, meaning that their status was not matched with the honour and respect to which they felt entitled.<sup>36</sup> John Towneley evidently had good reason to feel that he

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<sup>35</sup> This is a quotation from Claudian and relates to early modern disputes about whether honour depended on lineage or virtue. Thanks to Professor Cust for help on this point.

<sup>36</sup> Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour' p. 46.

had been singled out for excessive punishment and overlooked for preferment. Christopher Haigh notes that the frequency and length of his imprisonment was exceptional, due he claims, to the council's anxiety about Towneley's 'great power in the county', his wealth and the loyalty of his many tenants, noting that he was 'by far the most prosperous of the Catholics of the 1570s [in Lancashire]'.<sup>37</sup>

The central horizontal area of this portrait depicts all sixteen members of the Towneley family in attitudes of supplication with the children ranged beside their parents, boys on the viewers' left, girls on the viewers' right, by age, with the oldest nearest their parents and the youngest at the back with their heads touching the lower branches of the vine. The family are dressed appropriately for their age and rank while John wears the black cap and gown of his legal profession, an important signifier of his status.<sup>38</sup> John and Mary kneel on cushions on either side of a carved wooden prayer desk on which is laid an open book displaying the text 'Fiat voluntas tua sicut in celo et in terra', words taken from the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Fig. 5:5).<sup>39</sup> Immediately above the desk hovers a crucifix, where Christ with a gilded halo casts his eyes downwards towards the scene below, from his hands, side and feet blood falls towards the ground and the upraised hands of John and Mary. This is the object of the family's collective veneration, although only a few members have their gaze focussed there since most are turned towards the viewer, perhaps suggesting their continuing engagement with the world or a desire to draw the viewer into the scene. The chosen text which lies open on the desk, coupled with its proximity to the suffering Christ, stresses the family's obedience to the will of God and acceptance of their own suffering, even perhaps conflating their suffering with that of Christ. If this book is a prayer book it is relevant to note that both Catholics and Protestants often associated the

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<sup>37</sup> Haigh *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 261.

<sup>38</sup> John Towneley was admitted to Grays Inn in 1547, *Gray's Inn Admissions Register 1521-1887*, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Matthew 6, v. 10. The most likely version of the Bible to have been used by this family is the Douai-Rheims translation of the New Testament. Thanks to Dr Jonathan Willis for this information.

Lord's Prayer with the theological virtue of Hope, something which might have fortified the family.<sup>40</sup> However, the notion that persecution was part of God's purpose and should be endured was biblically sanctioned, so the text seems to suggest both perseverance in suffering and hope for the future.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 5:5 Portrait of *John Towneley and his family* (detail)

For Catholics the crucifix, symbolising Christ's passion, was at the liturgical heart of worship and the focus of devotion in the period before the Reformation, however by about 1615 much pre-Reformation imagery, especially crucifixes, images of the virgin, the trinity and saints had disappeared from parish churches.<sup>42</sup> Such images were regarded as idolatrous,

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<sup>40</sup> Thanks also to Dr Jonathan Willis for help on this point.

<sup>41</sup> For instance in St John's gospel Christ urges his followers: '... If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also/But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me ... He that hateth me hateth my Father also.' John Chapter 15: 20-24.

<sup>42</sup> Phillip Lindley, 'The Visual Arts and Their Functions in the English Pre-Reformation Church', in *Art Re-Formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 15-45; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*;

banned and publicly removed or destroyed or sometimes concealed in the hope they might be reinstated at a later date.<sup>43</sup> Even using the sign of the cross became controversial and as Margaret Aston confirms: ‘... the English church was firmly opposed to the physical presence of representations of the crucifixion’.<sup>44</sup> She also notes that hostility towards crosses and crucifixes grew in the 1560s and 70s claiming: ‘For an individual to take his hat off or kneel before a crucifix was enough to condemn a sculpted monument or even a plain cross to perdition.’<sup>45</sup> The portrait of the Towneley family, where all members kneel in supplication before the crucifix, from which Christ’s blood pours down towards them, is a powerful rejection of the protestant prohibition of image worship and a statement about the grace bestowed through veneration of images.

To add to this apparent devotion of the central crucifix there appears to be some semi private devotion to the cross by the Towneley’s oldest daughter Frances who kneels behind her mother, wearing a black gown over her dress with a cap on her head, indicating that she was married. (Fig. 5:6). Behind her left arm, Frances wears an enormous crucifix hung around her neck and across her chest, her head is turned and her gaze meets the viewer.

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Margaret Aston, ‘Cross and Crucifix in the English Reformation’, *Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte*, 33 (2002), pp. 253-72.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p. 259

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p. 260

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 264



Figure 5:6 Portrait of *John Towneley and his family* (detail)

Richard Williams draws attention to a different crucifix in the home of another prominent catholic family, this is a hand-modelled plaster crucifixion scene from Rushton Hall, Northamptonshire, the home of Sir Thomas Tresham, dated 1577 (Fig. 5:7).<sup>46</sup> Like John Towneley, Tresham spent many years imprisoned for his faith and Williams suggests that this imagery might have been located in the family's tiny domestic chapel.<sup>47</sup> The continued display of images of the crucifix in domestic contexts, as aids to devotion and to educate, despite the risks attached to their discovery, points to the tenacity with which families like the Treshams and Towneleys defended and continued to proclaim their faith.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, 'A Catholic Sculpture'; see also: Claire Gapper *British Renaissance Plasterwork* Chapter IV From Timber to Plaster: Courtly Ceilings in the Sixteenth Century Fig. 5:7, no pagination: [<http://clairegapper.info/from-timber-to-plaster.html>, Accessed January 2016].

<sup>47</sup> Williams, 'A Catholic Sculpture' p. 224-225.



Figure 5:7 Sir Thomas Tresham's *Crucifixion reredos*, (c. 1577), Rushton Hall, Northamptonshire

The text panel in the portrait of John and Mary Towneley and their family is divided from the rest of the composition by a broad russet band and narrates the years of John's persecution; it reads:

This John about the 6 or 7 year of her majesty yet now is for professing the apostolic Catholic Roman faith, was imprisoned first at Chester Castle then sent to the Marshalsea then to York Castle, then to the Blockhouses in Hull, then to the Gatehouse in Westminster, then to Manchester then to Broughton in Oxfordshire, then twice to Ely in Cambridgeshire and so now of 73 years old and blind is bound to appear and to keep within five miles of Towneley his house, who hath since the statute 23<sup>rd</sup> paid into the exchequer £20 a month and does still, yet there is paid already £5,000

This section is a formal statement of grievance which makes clear the extent of suffering endured by the head of the family in a narrative which would have resonated with many who shared his faith and which bears a close functional relationship with the Throckmorton *Tabula Eliensis* (Fig. 4:8). John Towneley stood trial repeatedly; once, standing before Bishop Downham, he was discharged, having promised to change his ways on a bond of three hundred marks to appear when required, to go to church and receive Holy

Communion three times a year and not to harbour any recusant priest.<sup>48</sup> This bond was soon broken, and he was again in prison for refusing to receive Holy Communion, although he had apparently attended church, making him for that short time a church papist. Alexander Nowell's plea to the Lord President of the Privy Council and the Archbishop of York: 'that the prison was somewhat 'noysum' and that by more 'courteous usage' John would sooner be brought to conformity' seems to have neither affected John's resolution nor the authorities' desire to continue punishing him.<sup>49</sup> By 1576 he was still in prison and by February 1582 he was in the New Fleet prison (Lancaster), this time pleading with members of the Privy Council for his liberty. They agreed, because 'the said Towneley (his religion excepted) doth carry himself dutifully and quietly'.<sup>50</sup> At all times John was able to rely on friends and family, both Protestant and Catholic, to support him and plead his case; family ties and 'old class' loyalties, it seems superseded confessional divisions.<sup>51</sup>

## **ii. Richard Towneley and his family**

John's persecution must have had a profound effect on his family and his steadfast resolution may have influenced his oldest son Richard to commission a second portrait, which like his father's, was of his whole family and probably chiefly designed to reinforce their generational fidelity to their faith. It has not been possible to locate this portrait, however, it is recorded in nineteenth century catalogues in the Towneley Archive now at the British Museum and a Christie, Manson and Wood catalogue recording its sale in 1939.<sup>52</sup> The latter has been augmented with handwritten notes and a sketch (Fig.5:8) and from these sources it has been possible to infer that this portrait was painted in oil on panel, and at

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<sup>48</sup> Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*, p. 83.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p 82.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p 84.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*; Davidson, 'Recusant Catholic Spaces', p. 23.

<sup>52</sup> BM, TY19/4, List of Portraits in the gallery, Towneley Hall, post 1838; BM, TY19/5, Notebook catalogue of family portraits and paintings, 1858; BM, TY19/6, Inventory of portraits and paintings at Towneley Hall, 1868; Christie Manson and Woods, Christie Manson and Woods, Lot 28, a Family Group, (Christie Manson and Woods, May 19<sup>th</sup> 1939), p. 9.



approximately one hundred and fourteen centimetres by a hundred and one centimetres was a little larger than the portrait of his father's generation.<sup>53</sup> The Christie Manson and Wood catalogue assigns the date of 1620 to this portrait and describes it as: 'A family group, A gentleman with his wife kneeling at a table [on which is a chalice and two open books], with their children, in a chapel. [Four sons behind him on left one daughter behind mother, three infants in a row on pillow bottom left]'.<sup>54</sup>

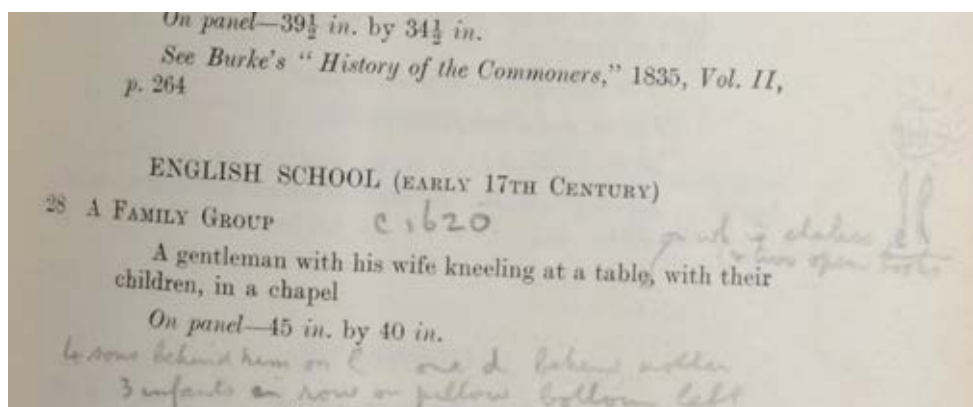


Figure 5:8 Lot 28, Christie, Manson and Woods, May 19th 1939, The Portrait of Richard Towneley and his family

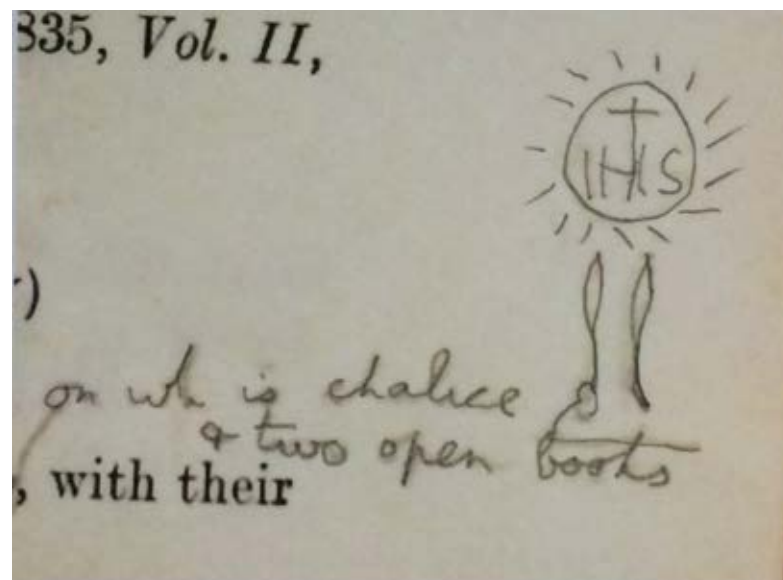


Figure 5:9 Lot 28, Christie, Manson and Woods, May 19th 1939, The Portrait of Richard Towneley and his family (detail showing drawing of monstrance)

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* The handwritten sections are inside square brackets.

These descriptions make it obvious that there were some important similarities in the composition of the two portraits as well as some differences. The similarities are the central desk or table on which lie open books, beside which the parents and their families kneel, sons behind their father, daughters behind their mother, while the later portrait has the addition of three dead (presumably swaddled) infants. Both scenes are set in an interior space but only the later portrait of Richard and Jane and their children is explicitly inside a chapel, as suggested by the catalogue entry.

Towneley Hall had a private chapel on its east side during the middle ages which may well have been the setting for the portrait of Richard and his family.<sup>55</sup> Before the years of persecution the Towneleys also worshipped at St Peter's Church, Burnley where their monuments and coats of arms record their presence.<sup>56</sup> Both generations of the family are portrayed in what are essentially private spaces and in acts of devotion. It is almost certain that Mass was celebrated in Towneley Hall, since in 1564-5 John Towneley confessed to housing 'Henry Crane, Clerk' who had lived in his house for six years and served as priest in nearby Padiham for four out of those years.<sup>57</sup> Several years later in 1568 John again admitted 'entertaining and receiving' priests in his home, one of the transgressions for which he was imprisoned.<sup>58</sup>

An important difference between the two portraits is the presence in the later one of what the handwritten notes in 1939 catalogue describe as a chalice (Fig. 5:9). The 'notebook catalogue' of family portraits and paintings at Towneley hall, however, describes the family kneeling before a gold remonstrance'.<sup>59</sup> Judging by the sketch in the Christie's catalogue this

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<sup>55</sup> The chapel moved to its present location in the north west corner of the house when the east wing was pulled down in about 1700, Nicholas Pevsner, *Lancashire, the Rural North, The Buildings of England* (London and Beccles: Penguin Books, 1969). p. 82

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80.

<sup>57</sup> Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants*, p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Gillow, 'Lord Burghley's Map', p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> BM, TY19/5, Notebook catalogue of family portraits and paintings at Towneley Hall, 1858.

is a monstrance rather than a chalice; these vessels were highly significant in catholic worship, ornately decorated, open or transparent, and in this case made of gold, and used to display the sacrament or host.<sup>60</sup> The sketch shows that the central transparent section of the Towneley monstrance contained the letters IHS, together with a small cross.<sup>61</sup> The depiction of such an object in a portrait is another overt expression of catholic religious practice, since it was during the Mass that this object was elevated, symbolising, according to believers, that the bread to be offered to the congregation was mysteriously converted to Christ's flesh (See Fig. 5:10). Like the use of crucifixes in worship, the belief in the reality of the transformation of bread to flesh was one of the practices which distinguished Catholics and part of what Lord Burghley referred to as 'the superstition'.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 5:10 Monstrance from the Blairs Museum's collection of sacred vessels, South Deeside Road, Aberdeen

<sup>60</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by J.A. and Weiner Simpson, E.S.C. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.1037; monstrances were sometimes used to house relics.

<sup>61</sup> IHS is from the Latinised version of the name 'Jesus'

<sup>62</sup> Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Cecil, William, first Baron Burghley (1520/21–1598)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4983>, accessed 28 April 2017]

The two Towneley portraits therefore both make explicit visual reference to distinctive catholic practices, the use of the crucifix and monstrance. These portraits are not direct representations of the catholic Mass but are symbolic allusions to that central part of the faith, referencing the body of Christ. Eamon Duffy points to the importance of celebrating the Mass as a communal activity, noting: ‘The Mass is the sign of unity, the bond of love: whoever desires to live, must be “incorporated” by this food and drink.’<sup>63</sup> These two portraits represent the Towneley family as faithful through two generations, drawing on a traditional language of catholic worship. John Bossy stresses the household nature of what he calls ‘seigneurial Catholicism’ which he sees as being adaptable to the household regime and regards as ‘a religion of communal observance and mutual obligation, binding the living to one another and to the dead’.<sup>64</sup>

Consideration of these portraits leads to questions about their function, display and reception. Depictions of the crucifix and monstrance raise the possibility that, like the Rushton Hall reredos, they may have been displayed in private spaces or a chapel and perhaps used only on specific, private occasions. However, an interesting sketch of the long gallery at Towneley as it was in 1835, is helpfully augmented by a list of portraits in the gallery of approximately the same time details their position at that date (Fig. 5:11).<sup>65</sup> This list notes that the portrait of John and Mary and their family and Richard and Jane and their family, (numbers one and four), were hung on the south, or bedroom side in the upper row opposite the window and are visible in the top right hand corner of the sketch. The long gallery at Towneley Hall was added some time in the seventeenth century in line with the developing vogue for portrait galleries and it is possible, though not certain, that this hanging

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<sup>63</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping*, p. 92.

<sup>64</sup> After a court appearance in 1581 Lord Vaux asserted that there was no need for him to attend church along with his household, because he claimed ‘his house to be a parish in itself’; John Bossy, *The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism*, *Past and Present* (1962), pp. 40-41.

<sup>65</sup> BM, TY19/4, List of Portraits in the gallery, Towneley Hall, post 1838, p. 13.

scheme shows the portraits in their original, Jacobean setting.<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to speculate that visitors entering the gallery would have encountered these two portraits immediately they entered, this significant position signals their important dynastic, confessional and public status.

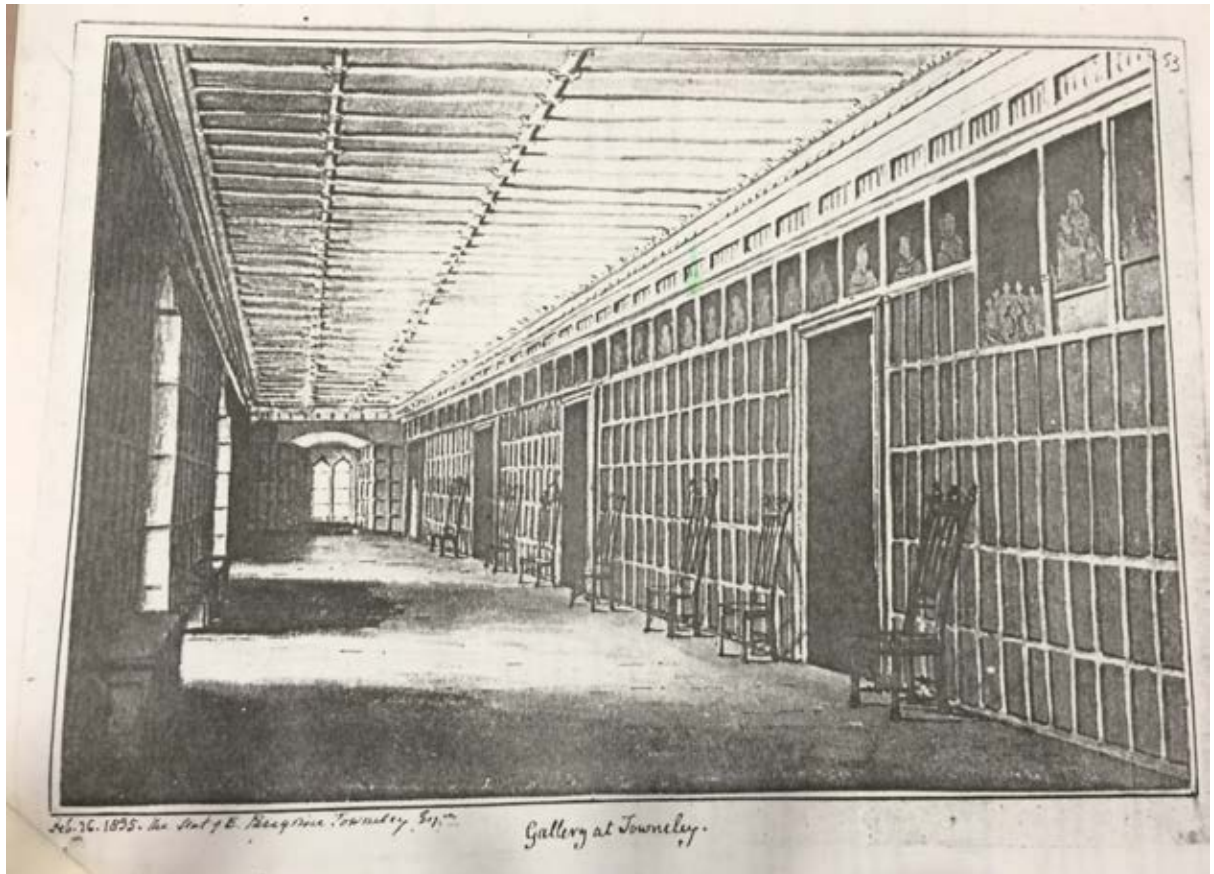


Figure 5:11 The Gallery at Towneley Hall in 1835. Source: Susan J. Hill, *Catalogue of the Towneley Archive at the British Museum*, British Museum Occasional Paper, 138 (2002)

Whether or not they were intended for display in the public space of the gallery or in the more private space of the family's chapel, the portraits' central purpose seems to have been to conflate the family's long lineage with their resolute fidelity to their catholic faith, acting as an uncompromising tool to protest at their treatment. The earlier portrait, depicting the figure of Christ on the cross, his blood pouring down towards the family, suggests that his

<sup>66</sup> John Martin Robinson, 'Towneley Hall, Lancashire', *Country Life* (1998), pp. 43-49; Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680* (New Haven ; London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in association with English Heritage by Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 300-308.

suffering was both for and with the family while the prayer book passage ‘thy will be done’ points to an acceptance of their persecution and even hope for the future. The later portrait is likewise defiant in its overt expressions of the family’s ancestral faith and its re-casting of the imagery of the previous portrait acts as a powerful statement of continuity and fortitude. Together these two portraits combine to construct a narrative which is about much more than family memory or even a protest at mistreatment, though they are that too, the explicitly catholic nature of their imagery suggests the need to make a clear statement about the Towneleys enduring fidelity to the old faith and their rejection of the new, protestant beliefs.

## Case Study 2: A Presbyterian family: The Chorley portrait



Figure 5:12 'JH', *The Family of Henry Chorley, Haberdasher of Preston*, c. 1665-1670, oil on canvas, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, Lancashire

The explicit catholic nature of the Towneley portrait contrasts with the image of the family presented in the portrait of Henry and Ellen Chorley and their presbyterian family from Preston in Lancashire.<sup>67</sup> This portrait now hangs in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery in Preston although it seems likely to have been originally destined to be hung in their home in the town (Fig. 5:12).<sup>68</sup> It will be argued here that the Chorleys used this portrait to conflate their multiple identities as religious, civic and commercial leaders and to explicitly articulate

<sup>67</sup> This case study develops Case Study Four in: Rosemary I. Keep, *Framing the Family : Early Modern Family Portraits and the Battle for Status*, Dissertation (M.A.) (University of Birmingham, Shakespeare Institute, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> In 1662 the family leased two burgages on the north side of Fryergate in Preston: LA,DDPD/11/43, 1662/3, Lease for 6 months at peppercorn rent.

the Presbyterian stress on the word of God and the 'right' education of children. This portrait not only contrasts the Chorley's and Towneley's faith positions but also their social positions, since the Chorleys were an urban family of the 'middling sort', as distinct from the elite, mainly rural families like the Towneleys whose portraits have been examined previously.<sup>69</sup> It is attributed to an unknown artist described as 'JH' and dated between 1665 and 1670, making it among the latest of the portraits examined in this thesis.<sup>70</sup>

This portrait does not conform precisely to any genre or style, however it may reference the common and popular images of protestant reformers which circulated in print and painted form as well as on various domestic items, in the decades before this portrait was completed.<sup>71</sup> These images, which had propaganda functions for the reformers, were variations and developments from the woodcut images which circulated across the northern European protestant countries in the latter half of the sixteenth century and into the following century (Fig.5:13), among the important details in these images is the presence of a table with books laid on it, in the same manner as the Chorley group.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Wrightson believes the term 'middling sort' emerged in the third decade of the seventeenth century to describe the rank of people between the 'gentry and the peasantry'. See Keith Wrightson, 'Sorts of People' in Tudor and Stuart England', in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800*, ed. by Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Attribution and dating: [[https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-chorley-family-of-preston-152187/view\\_as/grid/search/keyword:the-chorley-family/page/1](https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-chorley-family-of-preston-152187/view_as/grid/search/keyword:the-chorley-family/page/1), accessed May 2017].

<sup>71</sup> Pamela Tudor-Craig, 'Group Portraits of the Protestant Reformers', in *Art Re-Formed: Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), pp. 86-102; Alexandra Walsham, 'Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory, and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 69 (2016), especially pp. 591-604.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 593.





Figure 5:13 Unknown English Artist, *The Protestant Reformers*, c. 1654, Society of Antiquaries of London

Family portraits from this date are situated on the cusp of change when artists and provincial patrons were developing new visual vocabularies, which move away from the formal, static images of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, towards the ‘polite’ ‘conversation pieces’ of the eighteenth century.<sup>73</sup> These depicted families in more informal compositions and poses which suggest affectionate interaction between family members who are often engaged in conversation or play.<sup>74</sup> However, the formal composition and rigid, frontal stance of the Chorleys harks back to the more austere poses of the early seventeenth century with their steady gazes and upright postures.

By the late seventeenth century, portraiture was increasingly accessible to families below the ranks of the gentry, including members of ‘the middling sort’ like the many confident and wealthy urban families such as the Chorleys, who were haberdashers by trade.<sup>75</sup> The portraits

<sup>73</sup> Kate Retford, ‘The Conversation Piece’, *Burlington Magazine*, 151 (2009), pp. 715-17.

Shearer West, *Portraiture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 111.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 109-118.

<sup>75</sup> Haberdashers were suppliers of ribbons, trimmings, buttons, collars and other small goods; Primary sources for the Chorley family consist mainly of civic and legal records from Preston which chart their social and commercial progress in the town Secondary sources for the study of the Chorley family include: Edward Jeffery and Son, *The History of Preston in Lancashire Together with the Guild Merchant*, (London: University of Wisconsin, 1822); Chorley, Josiah, d. 1719?, *A brief memorial of the Bible: or, A summary of the chief matters contained in every chapter of the Old and New Testament. Done into metre for the help of memory*, (Printed by J. Astwood for Thomas Parkhurst ..., 1688); Alexander Gordon, ‘Chorley, Josiah (d. 1719?)’, rev. Stephen

of this new group stressed different aspects of their collective identity such as domesticity, harmony and, in this case, piety.<sup>76</sup> The Chorleys were Presbyterians, members of a church whose numbers were especially strong in Lancashire and the Scottish borders.<sup>77</sup> They believed in a style of church government by lay elders and were opposed to the rule of bishops and shared many beliefs with Calvinist Protestants, including the centrality of the Bible as the word of God; they held many doctrinal views in common with ‘hot’ Protestants or Puritans and their lifestyles had many similarities.<sup>78</sup>

The Chorley group is a large, though not life-sized portrait, a scale which suggests that if it originally hung in the family home it was in a substantial room. The group is posed in a dense, almost glossy black space with nothing to indicate wealth or status or locate them in a domestic setting. Henry senior and his wife Ellen bookend their six sons and together with the three oldest are dressed in dense black gowns. The younger boys are dressed in lighter tones of grey or brownish grey, which darken slightly with their age as if to suggest the gradual approach of maturity. The family surrounds a table covered in a flat sombre greyish-brown cloth and the drab palette is disrupted only by the strikingly white collars and

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Wright, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5352, accessed 28 April 2017]; Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, visited November 2015. The will of Henry and Ellin (sic) of 1669 LRO W/RW/A/R18B/16, is extant.

<sup>76</sup> Joanna Woodall, (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 4; for discussion of portraits of middling groups see: Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012); Tarnya Cooper with Jane Eade, *Elizabeth I and her people*, (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2013); Robert Tittler, *The Face of the City: Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester University Press, 2007); Robert Tittler, ‘Portraiture and Memory Amongst the Middling Elites in Post-Reformation England’, in (eds) Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist, *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, (Surrey, England and Vermont, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 37-57.

<sup>77</sup> John Spurr, ‘English Puritanism 1603-1689’, in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Social History in Perspective* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); After the religious settlement of 1662, Presbyterians were regarded as ‘dissenters’, practising their faith outside the national church alongside groups such as Baptists and Quakers.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? : Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1988); Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England : Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006); Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640*, Ebooks Corporation (2010).

cuffs worn by every member of the family which both unites the group and singles Ellen out as the only woman among them.

Ellen's collar is tied at the front with two tiny bows made of thin black ribbon, a thicker version prominently secures the cuff of her left sleeve which emerges from her gown. The three older boys' sleeves are also decorated with thin black ribbons tied in bows, while their father's cuffs are plain. Ellen's black bonnet, which almost disappears against the background, is tied under her chin with another black bow and a few dark curls frame her face; her dress is plain, dark, decent and modest with no jewellery to suggest ostentation or vanity. The monochrome palette is also subtly broken by the delicate shell-pink lining of the gowns of the two younger boys and by the pink bow tied to the cuff of the boy in the centre. The only other touches of colour are the pink (possibly once red) rose held by the son fourth from the left and the tiny bunch of cherries held by the youngest, who since he is not breeched must be under six years old. The ruddy complexions of all the family members, but particularly the older boys, add another touch of colour which suggests their robust health, even pointing to their stalwart characters, while their upright poses mirror their moral and spiritual stance. All the males, regardless of age, wear hair to their shoulders; only Henry senior has any facial hair, a thin moustache, suggesting his seniority.

The portrait is inscribed with their names, relating them either to Henry senior or to the oldest son John, in an arrangement which emphasises the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of the family. The inscriptions are in thick paint which stands proud of the surface of the canvas and overlies an earlier version, raising the possibility that they were a later addition to the portrait (Fig. 5:14). However, the text currently identifies the family members (left to right) as: 'Henry Chorley of Preston haberdasher', 'John the son of Henry', 'Josiah his brother', 'Joseph his brother', 'Henry his brother', 'Ellen the wife of Henry Chorley', 'Samuel his brother' and 'Daniel his brother'.

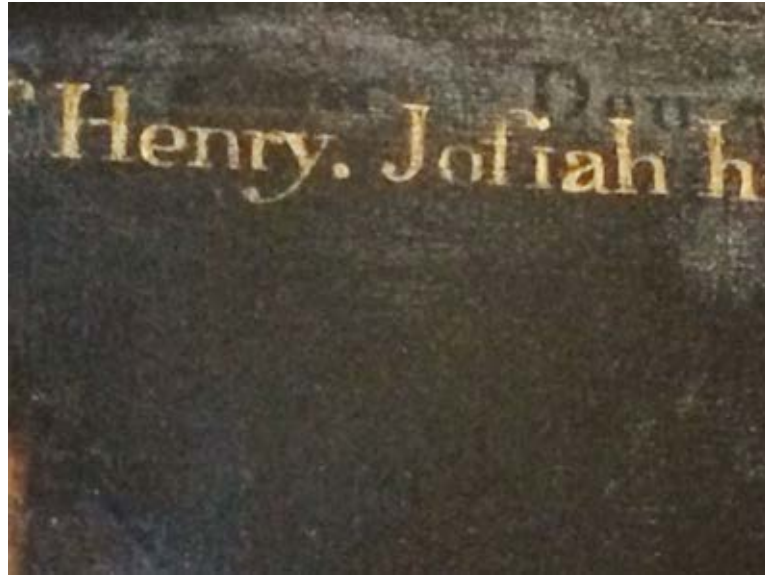


Figure 5:14 JH, The Family of Henry Chorley (detail showing text overlying earlier)

The composition emphasises family unity, the parents on either side of their children are seated on high-backed chairs which indicate their seniority and all the figures are static, their gazes fixed and unfocussed. Husband and wife are balanced in size, perhaps suggesting a level of equality between them, although Ellen, as the daughter of Richard Hodgkinson, a burgess and Mayor of Preston, might claim social superiority to her husband whose father was a butcher.<sup>79</sup> Their oldest son John stands head and shoulders above his father and taller than his brother, a detail which might indicate his seniority in the family or even that he commissioned the portrait.

Henry senior rests his right hand on his knee while his left holds open the pages of a book, perhaps a Bible, which has the corner of a page folded down; suggesting that the artist has caught him in the act of presiding over family prayers or bible reading. His left hand, weighing down the pages, indicates authority and familiarity with the text where a passage is marked. Henry senior's position at the head of the table, apparently laying claim to the Bible,

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<sup>79</sup> The couple married in 1648 and had at least nine sons, three of whom died before the portrait was painted: Harris Museum and Art Gallery.

identifies him as the head of the family and therefore with the most senior role and greatest responsibility as its spiritual head.

The protestant writer Lewis Bayly, in his devotional guide republished multiple times throughout the seventeenth century, stresses the special duty of household heads to educate their family, writing:

If thou be called to the government of a family, thou must not hold it sufficient to serve God, & live uprightly in thine own person: unless thou cause all under thy charge to do the same with thee.  
... if every householder were thus careful, according to his duty, to bring up his children and family in the service and fear of God in his own house then the house of God should be better filled and the Lord's Table more frequented every Sabbath day.<sup>80</sup>

This duty is one which Henry seems to take most seriously. His oldest son John, standing on his father's left, was born about 1649 and seems to gesture towards his chest with his left hand, in fact he is holding a button between his figure and thumb in a gesture whose possible significance will be discussed below. On John's left his brother Josiah holds a book, his fingers marking a page, its edge towards the viewer. The white line of the edge of the book points both to his brother Daniel and to the Bible on the table. Josiah was the most prominent member of the Chorley family, being ordained a presbyterian minister, but the portrait depicts him as a young man, perhaps a student, which suggests that the book is part of his studies.<sup>81</sup> In 1688 Josiah published a rhyming version of the Bible designed as an easy learning version for children and known as *A Metrical Index to the Bible*.<sup>82</sup> It may be that Josiah was working on an early version of this text while he was a student and this is the book he is holding in the portrait. It is significant that the book points to the head of his younger brother, whose shoulder and face overlies the Bible, a conjunction surely designed to draw attention to the central desire of presbyterian families to educate children in biblical knowledge.

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<sup>80</sup> Lewis Bayly, *The practice of pietie*, (London, Printed for Philip Chetwinde, 1654), p. 206 and p. 208.

<sup>81</sup> Gordon, 'Chorley, Josiah (d. 1719?)', *ODNB*.

<sup>82</sup> Chorley, *A brief memorial of the Bible*: 1688; Gordon, 'Chorley, Josiah (d. 1719?)', *ODNB*.

On Josiah's left, his brother Joseph holds a rose between the fingers of his left hand, probably signifying the family's Lancastrian roots. On his left Henry (junior) with a slightly paler and rounder face than his brothers', lays a hand lightly on the table. The youngest son Samuel, is seated on his mother's lap wearing an apron and skirts and holding two cherries in his right hand, the fingers of his left resting on his mother's arm which lies protectively across him suggesting her duty to care for him and his trust and affection for her. The cherries may signify the boy's innocence and fragility, as well perhaps, as Ellen's late fruitfulness.<sup>83</sup>

Samuel's older brother, Daniel, seated in the centre of the portrait and in front of the table, is its main focus. His hair and costume mimic those of his father and older brothers, apart from the childish pink ribbons at his wrist. Like his parents, he is seated upright in a brass-studded, high-backed leather chair which lends him an air of importance which is strengthened by his serious expression. On his knee Daniel holds an open book and like his father, uses his left hand to hold it down, simultaneously pointing to a passage in the text. The three books, one of which lies on his lap, one with which his brother Josiah points towards his head, and the other which his father lays on the table behind him, highlight the central importance of literacy in this family, which was of course a prerequisite to studying the Bible and a fulfilment of the duty which parents were believed to have to educate the young in biblical learning.

The use of a family table as the central image in this portrait was common in sixteenth and seventeenth century Dutch portraiture. As Wayne Franits eloquently demonstrates, its function was to emphasise the reverential atmosphere in the home; a particularly popular theme was that of families seated at table saying grace before a meal.<sup>84</sup> Franits points to the belief at the time that the purpose of childrearing was to create pious and virtuous adults and

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<sup>83</sup> Henry senior was fifty when the portrait was painted, assuming that Ellen was his junior, she could have been in her early forties or even older when Samuel was born.

<sup>84</sup> Wayne Franits, 'The Family Saying Grace: A Theme in Dutch Art of the Seventeenth Century', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 16 (1986), p. 36-49.

mealtimes were seen as being particularly important occasions to instil morals and manners.<sup>85</sup>

The image of families gathered round a meal table is much less common in English family portraiture although a woodcut of the period, used in certain broadside ballads, depicts a family gathered round a table at their meal (Fig.5:15).<sup>86</sup>



Figure 5:15 English School, *A Family Group*, seventeenth century, woodcut, private collection

There is no food on the Chorley's table, instead the portrait is freighted with spiritual meaning, even becoming a meditation on the centrality of the Bible in their family life. The table itself is a potent symbol, its size for example, is far too small for family dining, particularly as the Bible covers about a quarter of the surface. Although communion tables in church were similar in appearance to household tables its function in the portrait has a dual meaning. On the one hand it represents family nurturing and unity and on the other, in a dissenting family like this, it becomes a resonant symbol of their particular pious practices, since such people rejected the use of the altar in worship in favour of the domestic table to

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> The portrait of the aristocratic Cobham family of Longleat is a rare example of an English family seated at table but here the food and exotic items on the table seems to be a display of fashionable taste and wealth rather than of piety: Master of the Countess of Warwick (attr.) *William Brooke 10th Lord Cobham and His Family*, 1567, Longleat House, Wiltshire.

celebrate the sacrament of communion.<sup>87</sup> The Chorley's table of course is laid not with food, but with the Bible, because, it is implied, the only food in their house is 'the bread of heaven'.

Considering the potential of meal times as opportunities for prayer and meditation Lewis Bayly writes:

Before dinner and supper, when the table is covered, ponder with thy self upon these meditations; to work a deeper impression in thy heart, of God's fatherly providence and goodness towards thee.<sup>88</sup>

He urges moderation in eating and drinking adding:

...meat and drink, is unto us unclean, till the same be sanctified by the Word of God, and Prayer: and that man liveth not by bread only, but by the word of God's ordinances, and his blessing which is called the staff of bread (sic.). Sit not therefore down to eat, before you pray; and rise not before you give God thanks.<sup>89</sup>

#### **i. Cleanliness and godliness**

While this portrait emphasises the Chorley's spiritual identities it also conflates their worldly character through the abundant use of textiles, all of which appear to be of high quality and distinctively clean. The table cloth, for example, is neatly ironed with a central fold, while the collars and cuffs are bleached, starched and ironed. Keith Thomas points to the connections between outward cleanliness and spiritual cleanliness among dissenting groups.<sup>90</sup> Dirt was a sign of sin while 'Real cleanliness becometh a holy people'.<sup>91</sup> The emphasis on cleanliness was biblically based, Psalm 24 for example poses the question:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?/He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. /He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, pp. 336-351.

<sup>88</sup> Bayly, *The practice of pietie*, p. 216.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Keith Thomas, "Cleanliness and godliness in early-modern England," in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early-Modern Britain*, ed. Anthony Roberts and Peter Fletcher, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).pp. 56-83.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas, 'Cleanliness and godliness', p. 62.

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 24 v.3-5, The Bible, King James version.



This passage links cleanliness, inner purity and moral integrity, values for which the Chorley's clean linen is a metaphor. Church attendance demanded worshipers should wash and wear clean clothes as a sign of deference to God. In addition, as Thomas stresses, cleanliness was an important social marker which demanded respect, suggesting an orderly and well-run household and indicating high status.<sup>93</sup> As the pious Mrs. Walker wife of the rector of Fyfield, Essex, wrote to her grandson in 1689:

‘Dear Johnny, ... Keep thy hands and clothes clean; think of what I have sometimes said to thee, *All cleanly people are not good, but there are few good people but are cleanly* ... Our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Ghost, therefore due honour is to be given to them ...’<sup>94</sup>

While the Chorley's clean and high quality textiles might indicate that their wearers were ‘temples of the Holy Ghost’ they also, more prosaically, served to advertise the high quality of their haberdashery business. The ribbons, collars and buttons they dealt in are everywhere on show in the portrait, painted with accuracy and care because these were the source of the Chorley's wealth and their stake in Preston's booming commercial life. The neat black ribbon on Ellen's left arm is prominently positioned on her generous white cuff, displayed to the viewer to best advantage (Fig. 5:16). As noted above, John, the oldest son appears to gesture towards himself but is in fact holding a button between his thumb and forefinger, lifting it slightly forward as if for inspection in a gesture which apparently confirms the continuity of the successful trade in his hands. This portrait therefore has a plain commercial meaning in addition to its spiritual message as it offers a chance to exhibit the fine wares to be found on sale in the Chorley's haberdashery business and identifies them as possessing solid business sense.

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth Walker, *The Holy Life of Mrs Elizabeth Walker* (1690), pp. 291–2.



Figure 5:16 'JH', *The Family of Henry Chorley*, (detail of ribbon)

The Chorleys consolidated their religious, commercial and civic life by marrying into similarly ranked families of the same religious persuasion and their commitment to civic life and office holding was an important element in their stake in their town.<sup>95</sup> Tarnya Cooper has pointed to the use of portraits of an earlier date to register both social status and wealth as well as spiritual distinctiveness and it seems the Chorleys were using this complex portrait in the same way, both to proselytise their faith and advertise their commitment to their business.<sup>96</sup> It foregrounds the centrality of the Bible in the family's religious practice and demonstrates the importance of teaching the young.

<sup>95</sup> As noted, Ellen's father was mayor of Preston, an important office which was also held by her oldest son John in 1706 and in 1673 John was described as: 'one of the Baylives of Preston' and by 1685 'one of the Capital Burgesses and Common Council': [<http://www.hullhistorycentre.org.uk/discover/pdf/HullMayors2.pdf>]; Two members of the family became Presbyterian ministers, Josiah (discussed above and John's son Richard: Gordon, 'Chorley, Josiah' *ODNB*).

<sup>96</sup> Tarnya Cooper, "The Enchantment of the Familiar Face: Portraits as Domestic Objects in Elizabethan and Jacobean England," in *Everyday Objects*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, (England and USA: Ashgate, 2010).pp. 175-177.

### Case Study 3: ‘A mixed marriage’: The Markham portrait



Figure 5:17 British School, *Elizabeth Griffin, née Brudenell and her daughter Mary Markham*, c. 1635, oil on panel, private collection.

The first two case studies in this chapter demonstrated how portraiture exhibited the devotional practices of one resolutely catholic family and contrasted it with an image of a devout presbyterian family. This final case study, of the Markham family, focuses on the common but more complex situation in which households were divided by faith (Fig. 5:17). The portrait depicts three generations of the family, they are: Elizabeth, (top left) daughter of the staunchly Catholic Thomas Brudenell of Deene Park, Northamptonshire and wife of the catholic Rice Griffin, with their daughter Mary, a Catholic who married the Protestant Thomas Markham with their children.

It will be argued that Mary and Thomas’s oldest son and heir, Sir Griffin Markham, the armour-clad figure in the centre, probably commissioned this portrait as a way of

celebrating his own faith and memorialising his mother and grandmother's piety and catholic faith, something for which he was ultimately prepared to risk the scaffold.<sup>97</sup> It will also be argued that despite the antique appearance of the figures and costumes, the portrait was probably commissioned between the death of Sir Griffin's mother Mary, in 1633 but before his own death in 1644.

### **i. Elizabeth Rice and Mary Markham**

Although a Catholic like her parents, Elizabeth Rice (née Brudenell) married Thomas Markham, a courtier and steadfast Protestant. The portrait depicts fourteen of their children, some of whom followed the catholic faith of their mother while others adhered to their father's protestant beliefs, decisions which were of profound importance for both the individuals and the wider family.<sup>98</sup> Divisions in families like this were relatively common, perhaps even normal, as Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott point out:

It is now apparent that the boundary between strict recusancy and conformity, or occasional conformity, remained porous throughout the course of the seventeenth century. Individuals moved in and out of recusancy at certain points in the life cycle, or in response to the intensity of state repression; Catholic families might be divided between recusant and conformist branches, or the split might be evident within the household itself, (typically) a conforming husband marrying a recusant wife.<sup>99</sup>

While this portrait presents an opportunity to focus on one such divided family, it is more than an account of contested religious practices within a household, it is also an example of maternal faith and a powerful demonstration of the strength of female agency

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<sup>97</sup> Both the Brudenell and Markham families have been the subject of scholarly research which has focussed particularly on the extraordinary life of Griffin Markham whose fortunes are well documented because of the part he played in the Bye Plot: Mark Nicholls, 'Treason's Reward: The Punishment of Conspirators in the Bye Plot of 1603', *The Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 821-42; W. J. Tighe, 'A Nottinghamshire Gentleman in Court and Country: The Career of Thomas Markham of Ollerton, 1530-1607', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, 90 (1986), p.41.

<sup>98</sup> Joan Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, (London: Cassell, 1953), p. 484; David Frederick Markham, *A History of the Markham Family*, (London: John Bowyer, 1854), [[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0zLrxzfN8UsC&pg=PP12&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0zLrxzfN8UsC&pg=PP12&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false), Accessed June 2016].

<sup>99</sup> Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, *Catholic Gentry in English Society : The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) p. 2.

within the family. As such it resides at the interface of two powerful forms of social control - faith and patriarchy - and the choice of this portrait allows for an exploration of the ways in which families of mixed faith negotiated their differences within these constraints. Portraits had an important part to play in memorialising female virtue, among the chief of which was piety. In her autobiography Lady Grace Mildmay stresses the important duty which mothers were thought to have to transmit their family faith to their children and she uses her 'meditations' to do this, writing:

... And humbly beseech the Lord to bless my off spring with the graces of his holy spirit from generation to generation even unto the very day of the general resurrection, still, not so much to enjoy this transitory world nor the glory & vanities thereof, as much rather that they may be imbued with patience & grace, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt them in due time. To be thankful to him for all things and, never to forget his benefits & to declare the same unto their children for ever.<sup>100</sup>

The towering black-clad figure in the portrait is Elizabeth Brudenell whose first husband was the Catholic Rice Griffin of Braybrooke and Dingley, Northamptonshire; Mary was their only child whose marriage to the Protestant Thomas Markham brought a considerable fortune into that impoverished family.<sup>101</sup> Despite their differences in faith the Markhams appear to have appreciated Mary's qualities and she was described by her husband's great nephew Francis Markham as:

... a great inheretrix, wise, virtuous and very religious (in her religion which is Popish) gentlewoman. So careful in education of her children, whereof God blessed her with many. So good a housekeeper, so modest and obedient a yoke-fellow, and such in every respect as no man need wish a better.<sup>102</sup>

The portrait is painted in oil on board which appears to have been cut down at some time judging by the close cropping of the figures. Its composition is unsettling and bears no

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<sup>100</sup> Martin, Randall, 'The Autobiography of Grace, Lady Mildmay' *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 18 (1994), p. 77.

<sup>101</sup> Rice Griffin was killed in 1549 at Norwich during Kett's rebellion, Elizabeth subsequently married Francis Smith of Wootton Wawen, Warwickshire, Tighe, 'A Nottinghamshire Gentleman' p. 34.

<sup>102</sup> Tighe, 'A Nottinghamshire Gentleman in Court', p. 41.

relation to the usual rules of proportion or perspective giving it a crowded, claustrophobic feel. The figures are set in an unspecified interior space which includes architectural features and a green velvet curtain edged with a gold fringe, neither of which are fully resolved. The crude brushwork, limited colour palette and simple modelling of the figures suggest that it was executed by a provincial artist.

The composition is dominated by the large figure of the elderly Elizabeth looming over her daughter and grandchildren, her gaze cast down, her right hand raised in an ambiguous gesture which simultaneously suggests that she is in the act of bestowing a blessing on her daughter and grandchildren but also directs towards the suspended crucifix. In her left hand she holds a red book which forms a splash of bright colour against her gown; this is perhaps a catholic text or Bible where her fingers are inserted to mark a particular passage suggesting familiarity with this book or that she has paused in her reading. Elizabeth's black gown is topped with a widow's hood, while her pale face is framed by a closed cartwheel ruff, a style fashionable in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>103</sup> In the top right-hand corner of the painting a white scroll reads:

This portraiture doth represent Elizabeth daughter of Sir Thomas Brudenell. Knt: of Deene. First married to Rice Griffin Esquire deceased in Norwich fen who was son and heir to Sir Thomas Griffin of Brabrooke Hall and had issue by him one daughter named Mary. Second she was married to Francis Smith of Wootton Wawen in Warwickshire. This is the loving memory of the aforesaid Mary the only daughter and heir to Rice Griffin and Elizabeth. She was married to Thomas Markham esquire of Allerton [Ollerton] in Sherwood she had issue by him of sixteen children whereof ten were sons and six daughters

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<sup>103</sup> Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress : A Costume and Social History*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), p. 84; Aileen Ribeiro and Valerie Cumming (eds), *The Visual History of Costume*, (London: Batsford, 1989), p. 97; See also: Unknown continental artist, *'Darnley Portrait' of Queen Elizabeth I*, 1575, oil on panel, NPG, London for this style of ruff. Elizabeth was widowed twice, the first time after the death of her first husband Rice Griffin in 1549, the next on the death of her second husband Francis Smith in 1605. Philip Styles (ed.) 'Parishes: Wootton Wawen', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 3, Barlichway Hundred*, (London, 1945), pp. 196-205 [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol3/pp196-205>] Accessed 14 January 2016].

As this text makes clear, this portrait was commissioned to memorialise Mary Markham, the figure in the lower right section, who is depicted kneeling in an attitude of prayer, apparently to receive her mother's blessing while she, in her turn, prays for her children. Mary's impassive face is framed by chestnut brown hair and an elaborate, deeply pleated lace linen ruff, which like her mother's is a style fashionable in the late sixteenth century. Her hands are held in an attitude of prayer suggesting her piety and desire to protect her children through prayer.

The abnormally large size of the two older women confirms their importance in the composition. Immediately above Mary's head and almost touching her headdress is the most overtly catholic detail in the portrait, a crucifix which appears to float above her, its importance stressed by her mother's gesturing hand. The figure of the crucified Christ is a curiously disembodied presence which gives the circle of her headdress a halo-like effect and like the crucifix in the Towneley portrait raises questions about the original location and function of this work, which in a conforming protestant family like the Markham's was unlikely to have been used for private devotion and perhaps not even publicly displayed.

Mary Markham, while evidently receiving her mother's blessing, in turn prays over the diminutive figures of her adult children, males on the viewers' left, females on the right strikingly resembling the figures on sculpted funeral monuments.<sup>104</sup> The girls, immediately below their mother, overlap her body and their doll-like faces are expressionless, although an attempt at individualising them has been made through their differing hair colour and slight variations in the hair styles. The nine sons also have blank expressions and individuality is expressed only through subtle changes in hair colour and length. All but the central figure

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<sup>104</sup> Fourteen children are represented here, although the scroll notes that Mary had seventeen, while C.J. Black claims she had eleven who survived and seven more who died in infancy: C. J. Black, 'Markham, Thomas (by 1523-1607), of Ollerton, Notts. And Kirby Bellars, Leics.', in *History of Parliament online*, P.W. Hasler (ed.) [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/markham-thomas-1523-1607> Accessed 29 April 2017].

wear plain black doublets overlaid with gold chains topped with turned down collars.<sup>105</sup> It seems that these young men, with their auburn or blonde hair were not painted from life since in 1603 three of them were described as, ‘tall of stature’ and ‘... of exceeding swarthy and bad complexions and all have very great noses’, here their hair is fair or ginger.<sup>106</sup>

As noted, placed centrally among the children and first in the line of sons, and directly below the slant of his mother’s hands in prayer, the figure wearing Greenwich armour is Sir Griffin Markham, Thomas and Mary Markham’s oldest son, whose appearance, like that of his brothers and sisters does not match a contemporary account which was that he had a: ‘large broad face, of a black complexion, a big nose, one of his hands is maimed by a hurt in his arm received by the shot of a bullet’.<sup>107</sup> The representation of himself in armour and carrying the gloves just visible on his right hip, is significant, recalling both his military service and the honour of the knighthood he received as a result.

Despite the fact that Griffin Markham’s career as a soldier was successful, by 1603 the family was heavily in debt, due, he believed because his progress among the English catholic gentry was thwarted by the Jesuit faction.<sup>108</sup> However, he had also alienated many of his influential neighbours in Nottinghamshire and his hopes of advancement were dashed by the new king, meaning that he was left angry and without support at court.<sup>109</sup> By 1603 his father was senile and Griffin was supporting his parents financially, paying them a maintenance allowance, an action which prompted his uncle Sir John Harington to praise him in a letter to Cecil: ‘old Markham dotes at home and his honest son Sir Griffin your kinsman,

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<sup>105</sup> Tighe, ‘A Nottinghamshire Gentleman in Court’, p. 34.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Markham was known as ‘black Markham’ because of his black hair and dark complexion; *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> This was the description given of Sir Griffin’s appearance when he fled after a proclamation was made for his arrest, Mark Nicholls, ‘Markham, Sir Griffin (*b. c.1565, d. in or after 1644*)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18066>, accessed 29 April 2017]. Griffin was the only member of the Markham family to be knighted, an event which took place in 1591 when he was serving as a volunteer with the earl of Essex in the Low Countries and France; *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*; Tighe, ‘A Nottinghamshire Gentleman’, p. 40; Nicholls, ‘Markham, Sir Griffin *ODNB*.



like an Eneas that would carry his father out of the flames, is like to burn in it with him, the lubber is so heavy to lie on his maimed son's shoulders'.<sup>110</sup>

The remarkable events of Sir Griffin Markham's life which followed the year 1603 and led to his complicity in the Bye Plot sprang both from despair at his financial state and frustration with his loss of influence at court, but principally from his catholic convictions. In the summer of 1603, just before the coronation of the new king, James I, a conspiracy was discovered whereby a group of catholic priests and laymen including Griffin Markham, planned to kidnap James, hold him hostage and attempt to extract a guarantee of religious toleration and the removal of anti-Catholic councillors from court.<sup>111</sup> Markham was among the laymen convicted of high treason for this conspiracy at a trial in Winchester in November 1603.<sup>112</sup> His twin brothers, Charles and Thomas were also implicated, but their mother, who still had influence with the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, interceded on their behalf and they were pardoned.<sup>113</sup> While three of the conspirators were executed, Griffin, despite his close involvement in the plot, was among those granted a last minute reprieve from the scaffold, this was perhaps due to his ability to make 'many men sorry for him, and my Lord Cecil weep abundantly' from the dock.<sup>114</sup> Instead of the scaffold he was exiled, spending the next forty years of his life rootless on the continent trying to find employment as a soldier, attaching himself to various continental courts.<sup>115</sup>

It is clear from Sir Griffin's involvement in the Bye Plot that his identity as a Catholic was one of the chief motivating forces in his life and probably what prompted him to commission this portrait to memorialise the two women, his mother and grandmother, from whom he learned his faith. Despite the disaster which her son had wrought on the family, his

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 'his maimed son' presumably refers to Sir Griffin's arm damaged in battle.

<sup>111</sup> Nicholls, 'Treason's Reward', p. 821

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p. 823

<sup>113</sup> Tighe, 'A Nottinghamshire Gentleman', p. 40

<sup>114</sup> Nicholls, 'Markham, Sir Griffin', *ODNB*.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

mother Mary remained in contact with Griffin, reproaching him for all that had happened, yet seeking to maintain family unity. In a letter of 14 April 1604, three months after his exile, she wrote that the problems her son had caused ‘may grieve me but not offend me, I cannot but love you ... whoever hears me may think me a kind fool but I thank god not an unnatural mother.’<sup>116</sup>

Despite Griffin’s zealous adherence to Catholicism, his protestant father Thomas Markham appears to have been relatively tolerant of dissent in the family, offering shelter to his wife’s unmarried aunt, the fiercely devout Lucy Brudenell.<sup>117</sup> Both of Mary Markham’s parents, the Griffins, were Catholics. Her mother Elizabeth moved in highly dangerous circles, regularly sheltering a Jesuit priest, John Percy, a man who was sought by the Privy Council and lived under various aliases while hiding in the homes of Northamptonshire catholic gentry. Elizabeth’s formidable appearance in the portrait seems to reflect her resolute determination.<sup>118</sup> It seems that even in families like this, where faith was divided yet zealous, kinship ties overrode the divisions of faith, even at occasional risk of imprisonment or worse.

While it has been argued that Sir Griffin Markham was the most likely person to have commissioned this portrait, its dating remains problematic and complex. As explained above, between his exile in January 1604 and his death around 1644 Griffin Markham led a semi-itinerant existence on the continent and it is possible, although not certain, that he commissioned the work from a continental artist during these years of exile, having it returned to England after his death or via a third party during his lifetime.<sup>119</sup> The wide time band for the commission can be narrowed because, as the scroll clearly states, this is a memorial portrait: ‘this is [in] the loving memory’ of Mary, his mother. Mary Markham in

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<sup>116</sup> Tighe, ‘A Nottinghamshire Gentleman’, p. 41.

<sup>117</sup> Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, p. 97.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> TNA,E199/35/42, Nottinghamshire: Inventory of goods of Sir Griffin Markham, 1603-1604, indicates that just over £74 was seized when he was exiled.

fact remained at the family home at Ollerton, Nottinghamshire long after her oldest son's disgrace, dying there in 1633 at the great age of over ninety. The possibility that the scroll and perhaps the awkward crucifix were late additions to the portrait, should be considered, although since the left corner of the scroll disappears behind Elizabeth's headdress, it seems unlikely.

It appears logical therefore that the portrait was commissioned during the eleven years between Mary's death in 1633 and that of her son in 1644.<sup>120</sup> If this was the case there appears to have been a deliberate conflation of the ages of the children who are all depicted in their early twenties whereas by this time their ages spanned 1565 to 1588. The archaic appearance of the costumes and the naïve brushwork suggest a date nearer 1600 than 1633, however such temporal precision is unnecessary and redundant in memorial portraits where sitters may be shown in their 'ideal' age of young maturity. The costumes of all the women reflect styles fashionable in the last quarter of the sixteenth century rather than 1633. It seems likely therefore that the work was commissioned by Sir Griffin Markham after his mother's death, either on the continent or with the collaboration of his family in England and that a conscious attempt was made to depict the family in archaic costume in an effort to evoke long lineage. The most significant of these costumes is the armour worn by Sir Griffin himself in a style like that made at the royal armoury at Greenwich in the mid sixteenth century.<sup>121</sup> As Ellen Chirelstein has pointed out the wearing of armour in this prestigious style linked an individual to a military career in the service of the crown and was both an emblem of ancient honour and an opportunity for admirable self-display.<sup>122</sup> Greenwich armour, and its

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> See for example The Almain Armourer's Album, V&A [<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78116/the-almain-armourers-album-the-armour-design-halder-jacob/> accessed June 2016].

<sup>122</sup> Ellen Chirelstein, 'Emblem and Reckless Presence: The Drury Portrait at Yale', in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. by Lucy Gent (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 294

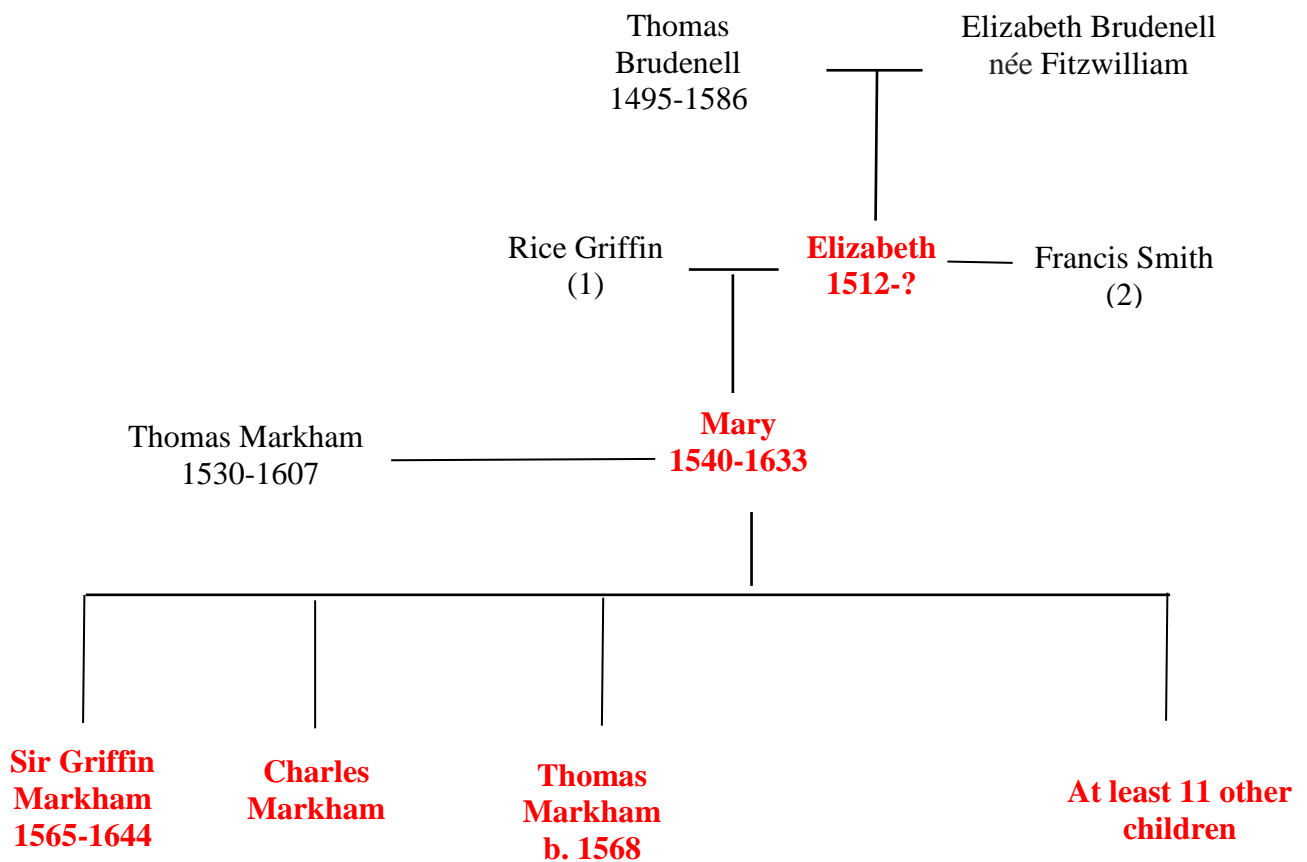
association with ancient virtue, placed Sir Griffin within a chivalric code of honour from which his treasonous behaviour had in reality excluded him.

While this costume detail suggests the celebration of male honour, the portrait's central theme is female honour and in particular the inheritance of piety. This is constructed through the dominant poses of the prayerful mothers who create a line of female devotion apparently cascading through generations, reminding the viewer of the power that wives could exercise over matters such as their children's religious education. As 'yoke-fellows' Thomas and Mary must have navigated their marriage through complex and difficult waters, while apparently remaining within the orthodox constraints of patriarchy in which Mary's maternal devotion, housekeeping skills, modesty and obedience were lauded. The Markhams were evidently a family for whom kinship ties transcended religious divisions and where extreme views and actions such as those of Sir Griffin were no barrier to continuing maternal and filial affection. Indeed, the portrait can be read as a celebration of Sir Griffin's faith, as inherited through his grandmother and mother, as much as a memorial to these two women. He is the natural successor to their piety as signalled through their directed postures and gestures.

### **Chapter Five: conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which portraits act to define specific religious differences between families across confessional divides, concluding with a family who accommodated those divisions. The following, and final chapter, develops some of the themes explored here in a discussion of 'Death and Memorialisation', in particular examining questions of female virtue and the important role of mothers in the inheritance of faith. It focusses on two portraits of dead or dying women which were commissioned, it will be argued, to memorialise their piety in order to instruct future generations.

Fig. 5:18 Members of the Markham family mentioned in the text  
(individuals in the portrait shown in red)



#### Sources:

David Frederick Markham, 'A History of the Markham Family', (London: John Bowyer, 1854)

Joan Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*, (London: Cassell, 1953)

Mark Nicholls, 'Markham, Sir Griffin (b. c.1565, d. in or after 1644)', in *ODNB*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

N. M. Fudge, 'Markham, Thomas (by 1523-1607), of Ollerton, Notts. And Kirby Bellars, Leics.', in *History of Parliament online*, ed. by P.W. Hasler (Published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603* 1981),

## CHAPTER SIX

### DEATH AND MEMORIALISATION

#### Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis considers the relationship between family portraits, death and memorialisation. Its three case studies draw attention to a relatively small group of portraits which depict female family members as either dead or in the process of dying. While most portraits represent their subjects in life, albeit with the intention of keeping their memory alive for the future, this chapter will demonstrate that this other type of portrait was commissioned in order to construct a specific post-mortem identity for its subjects, arguing that their imagery presents their subjects as powerful religious exemplars in anticipation of their afterlives.<sup>1</sup> These were more than mere records of family deaths or even attempts to keep the memory of family members alive; rather they were permanently active exemplars of domestic virtue, even what Tarnya Cooper refers to as ‘perpetual prayers’, with an important part to play in the performance of memory, gender and collective self-fashioning.<sup>2</sup> All three case studies draw attention to the ways in which portraits of the dead and dying were used to express intense private grief while simultaneously engaging with the wider social world of faith, gender and rank.

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<sup>1</sup> Debra L Parish, ‘The Power of Female Pietism: Women as Spiritual Authorities and Religious Role Models in Seventeenth-Century England’, *The Journal of Religious History*, 17 (June 1992), 33-46.

<sup>2</sup> Tarnya Cooper, ‘Frail Flesh, as in a Glass’: The Portrait as an Immortal Presence in Early Modern England and Wales’, in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. by Mary Rogers (Hampshire and Vermont: Ashgate, 2000), p. 201. Shearer West, *Portraiture, Oxford History of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 62; for discussion of other functions of portraiture see West, *Portraiture* Chapter Two, pp. 43-69. Ian Archer notes that in the early modern period, funeral sermons and pictures were all referred to as ‘monuments’ or ‘memorials’: Ian W. Archer, ‘The Arts and Acts of Memorialization in Early Modern London’, in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*, ed. by J. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) ft.6 p. 91; For discussion of some the ways in which husbands were memorialised in portraiture see: Elizabeth Honig, ‘In Memory: Lady Dacre and Pairing by Hans Eworth’, in *Renaissance Bodies*, ed. by Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1990), p. 68.

How the dead were remembered has been the subject of scholarship in recent years and this chapter introduction engages with the recent historiography, offering a broad overview of the culture of memorialisation in the early-modern period, paying special attention to the influence of the Reformation and contributing a new perspective with its attention to group portraits.<sup>3</sup> There are particularly close parallels between posthumous family portraits intended for domestic contexts, and sculpted monuments in church, since both relate closely to the body of the deceased and to the wider family, and also make, as Peter Sherlock asserts [of monuments]: ‘... powerful statements about the fear of Death, the fate of the dead, the hope of salvation and the emotions of the living.’<sup>4</sup>

Before the Reformation, rituals of remembrance were rooted in the catholic church’s teaching about the importance and efficacy of remembering the dead in prayer as a means of shortening their time in purgatory.<sup>5</sup> Remembering included not only prayer but performative practices such as obits, charitable giving, funeral sermons, the erection of memorial sculpture

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<sup>3</sup> Astri Erll, ‘Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies’, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42 (2011), pp. 303-18; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida : Reflections on Photography*, Translated by Richard Howard, (London: Vintage, 1993); for historical studies see: Gordon, Andrew and Rist, Thomas eds *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, (Surrey, England and Vermont, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2013); Robert Tittler, ‘Portraiture and Memory Amongst the Middling Elites in Post-Reformation England’, pp. pp. 37-57 and Tara Hamling, ‘“An Arelome to This Hous for Ever”: Monumental Fixtures and Furnishings in the English Domestic Interior, c. 1560-1660;’ pp. 59-83; Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), J.S.W Helt, ‘Memento Mori: Death, Widowhood and Remembering in Early Modern England’, in *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Allison Levy (Hampshire and Vermont: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 39-55; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Ian W. Archer, ‘The Arts and Acts of Memorialization in Early Modern London’, in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720*, ed. by J. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 89-113; William E. Engel, Rory Loughnane, and Grant Williams, (eds) *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England : A Critical Anthology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Jonathan Finch, ‘A Reformation of Meaning: Commemoration and Remembering the Dead in the Parish Church, 1450-1640’, in *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, ed. by David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist, (Leeds: Maney, 2003); Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750*, *Oxford Studies in Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c.1500 - c.1800* (1992); Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars : Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory*, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 6-92.

and annual remembrances.<sup>6</sup> Even after the Reformation remembering the dead in sermons and elsewhere was regarded as a duty and there were especially important ways to honour the deceased's memory, firstly by caring for dependents and secondly by maintaining their good reputation, literally 'speaking well of the dead'.<sup>7</sup> The desire to preserve the reputation of the deceased was clearly important within families because the standing and character of the whole group was affected. The great posthumous portrait of Sir Henry Unton of 1596 commissioned by his wife, for example, demonstrates the link between worldly reputation and death (Fig. 6:1). It depicts the dead man flanked by the figure of Fame (left), equipped with laurels to crown his head and blowing a trumpet, while the skeletal figure of Death approaches from the right bearing an extinguished candle.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 6:1 Unknown artist, Sir Henry Unton, 1596, oil on panel, NPG, (detail)

<sup>6</sup> Obits were services for the dead to be celebrated at certain fixed periods sometimes involving bequests of land. Duffy notes that Cranmer was anxious to be sure that laity were dissuaded from traditional obit bequests on their deathbeds and attempted to root out other catholic deathbed rituals: Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 461-2.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 266-270.

<sup>8</sup> See: National Portrait Gallery, 'The Portrait of Sir Henry Unton (c. 1558 - 1596)', (2017), [<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/case-studies/the-portrait-of-sir-henry-untion-c.-1558-1596.php>, Accessed May 2017].



The association between portraiture, remembrance and piety is often made explicit, as for example, in these comments made the musician and composer Thomas Whythorne who observed in 1576 that:

... divers do cause their counterfeits [portraits] to be made, to see how time doth alter them from time to time; so thereby they may consider with themselves how they ought to alter their conditions, and to pray to God that as they do draw towards their long home an end in this world, so they may be the more ready to die in such sort as becometh true Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Whythorne was asserting, in other words, that portraits could aid the contemplation of human mutability and through self-reflection help viewers prepare for their ‘long home’ – death, aiding pious examination and calling to mind the need for repentance.<sup>10</sup> After the Reformation, emphasis in church teaching changed from one where the living were encouraged to pray for the souls of the dead, to a reformist, protestant approach where the living were instead taught to prepare for a good death, confident in their salvation.<sup>11</sup> Marshall identifies the years around the late sixteenth century as marking a watershed in the ways in which the dead were remembered. After this date and probably influenced by Renaissance humanism as well as protestant notions of the afterlife, sculpted memorials in churches increasingly stressed the importance of an individual’s life-time spiritual and secular achievements.<sup>12</sup> This also found a visual language in portraiture, in for example, portraits like the Saltonstall group (case study two, below) which it will be argued, celebrate a pious life through the exemplary deathbed performance of its subject as a sign of her status among ‘the Elect’.

*Memento mori* symbols which anticipated death and expressed humility before God are common in the portraits of protestant families and include skulls, scythes and hour glasses. A

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Whythorne, *The Autobiography of Thomas Whythorne*, ed. J. Osborn, (Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>10</sup> Cooper, ‘Frail Flesh, as in a Glass’, p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 345.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 270-271.

striking example is the portrait of Sir Percyvall Hart and his sons from Lullingstone Castle in Kent of 1575 where the hour glass is positioned on top of a skull in an obvious reference to human mortality (Fig. 0:1). The contemplation of death, which is explicit in this portrait, may have been sharply in the minds of the family at the time, since another of Sir Percyvall's sons had recently died, an event which may account for their black mourning clothes.<sup>13</sup> *Memento mori* like these are often based on biblical references which contrast human frailty with the permanence of God, sometimes with special reference to the fragility of childhood. For example, a two year old child in the portrait of the Bartholomew family holds a tiny Dandelion clock while another holds a stalk of corn, perhaps referencing biblical passages such as: 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, But the word of our God shall stand forever' (Fig.6:2).<sup>14</sup>



Figure 6:2 English School, *Group Portrait of a Family*, traditionally identified as the Bartholomews of Burford, Oxfordshire, c. 1600, private collection (detail of child holding dandelion clock)

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<sup>13</sup> Jane Eade, 'The Triptych Portrait in England 1585-1646', *The British Art Journal*, Vol. 6, p.4.

<sup>14</sup> This notion has Biblical roots, explicitly asserting the weakness, fragility and transitory nature of human life compared with Time, the power of God and History, the Bible, KJV: Isaiah 40: 6-8.

Portraits have the apparent ability to record superficial appearance and character, seemingly bringing the dead back to life, giving them a permanent place in the home, restoring relationships of affection and intimacy and comforting the bereaved, something made explicit in the common term for a portrait, ‘counterfeit’ meaning ‘copy’ or ‘duplicate self’.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary textual accounts confirm this theory, for example in Richard Haydocke’s English translation of Lomazzo’s tract on painting comes the claim that portraiture should be: ‘... a kind of preservative against Death and Mortality: by a perpetual preserving of their shapes, whose substances physic could not prolong ...’<sup>16</sup>

The process of remembering, and memory itself, was imagined as a visual faculty in the early-modern period and images of the dead were believed to have an important role in prolonging life beyond the grave.<sup>17</sup> Juan Luis Vives for example claimed that the dead remained alive ‘if the lively image of them be imprinted in our hearts with often thinking upon them’, finally dying only once they were forgotten.<sup>18</sup> By paying close attention to individual family histories and drawing on textual as well as material sources, the case studies which follow demonstrate the complex interaction between memory, death and the desire to memorialise the dead casting new light on the function of posthumous memorial portraits.

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<sup>15</sup> Cooper, ‘Frail Flesh, as in a Glass’, p 201.

<sup>16</sup> G.P. Lomazzo, *A Tracte Containing the Artes of curious Paintinge and Carvinge & Building*, trans R. Haydocke, (Oxford, 1598), preface, iii.

<sup>17</sup> Honig, ‘In Memory’ p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *A very fruteful and pleasant booke called the Instruction of a christen woman*, trans. R. Hyde (London, 1557), pp. Nn ii verso ff (1<sup>st</sup> edn, 1529).

### Case study 1: Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife



Figure 6:3 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife*, 1635, oil on canvas, 203.2 cms x 215 cms, Manchester Art Gallery

When Lady Magdalene Aston died in childbirth on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1635 her grieving husband Sir Thomas commissioned two memorials to record his anguish, celebrate her virtues and maintain her memory.<sup>19</sup> One, which he erected near the altar on the north side of his family

<sup>19</sup> George Ormerod, and Thomas Helsby, *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester .... Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged, by Thomas Helsby, ... In Three Volumes* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Broadway, Ludgate Hill, 1882), Vol I pt 2 pp. 724-727; Sir Thomas Aston was a member of a prominent Cheshire gentry family who established a national reputation as a defender of traditional aspects of the Church of England, particularly on behalf of the Book of Common Prayer, supporting what he saw as the lawful ceremonies and liturgy of the church against the Laudian theology of the episcopate: See E. C. Vernon, 'Aston, Sir Thomas, first baronet (1600–1646)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/827>, accessed 30 April 2017] and Sir Thomas Aston, *The Short Parliament (1640) Diary of Sir Thomas Aston*, ed. by Judith D. Maltby and Society Royal Historical (London: Royal Historical

chapel at Aston, Cheshire, was a marble tablet topped with the couple's coats of arms inscribed with a sixteen line rhyming verse, composed by himself.<sup>20</sup> The other, also topped with a coat of arms, was the large, complex portrait by John Souch, presumably designed for Aston Hall (Cheshire), the home they had shared, which is the subject of this case study (Fig. 6:3).

Despite the extraordinary quality and refinement of the portrait, it was completed a mere seventeen weeks after Lady Aston's death, suggesting her husband's urgent need to find a visual locus for his grief before her memory faded.<sup>21</sup> This case study will assert that while the commissioning of this portrait represents a simple and spontaneous response from a bereaved husband, whom Collins Baker described as 'reeling in grief', it is also a highly sophisticated and complex image containing an array of symbolic references to Sir Thomas's piety, education and accomplishments. It will also be demonstrated that it includes a carefully rendered *vanitas* still life designed to prompt the viewer to contemplate the fragility of human life and the vanity of the world in the face of death.<sup>22</sup>

This case study engages with debates about the identity of the female figure seated at the foot of Lady Aston's bed and interrogates both Nigel Llewellyn's view that she represents the dead woman's social body, depicted as though she were still in the company of her family and

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Society, 1988). Richard Cust regards Sir Thomas Aston as an ambitious man whose marriage to Magdelene Poultney revived the family's financial fortunes and allowed him to purchase a baronetcy in 1628, he appears therefore to have been ambitious, politically active and pious, Thanks to Professor Richard Cust for access to unpublished research on the Aston family; see also Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c.1500-c.1800* (1992), pp. 28-34 for discussion of the didactic function of portraiture in celebrating the lives and deaths of virtuous individuals.

<sup>20</sup> Ormerod, and Helsby, *The History of the County Palatine*. p. 726.

<sup>21</sup> Julian Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch of Chester', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 139, No. 1130 (May, 1997), pp. 300-07.

<sup>22</sup> Vanitas from Lat.: 'emptiness' is a type of painting concerned with the fragility of man and his world of desires and pleasures in the face of the inevitability and finality of death. It is essentially a biblical term, referring to the vanity of earthly possessions: the corresponding Hebrew term means 'smoke' or 'vapour'. The *vanitas* tradition, which also appears in Western literature and other representational arts, was a particularly important element in paintings in the Netherlands in the 17th century: Hans J. Van Miegroet, 'Vanitas', *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. (Oxford University Press. 3 Jan.017) [<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T087870>], Accessed May 2017].

Treuherz's opinion that she is more likely to be either one of Lady Aston's sisters, or another of the female attendants at her funeral whose presence in the portrait invited the viewer to contemplate their own mortality.<sup>23</sup> It will be argued that while both sides of this debate have merit, various iconography details lend more compelling support to Llewellyn's stance.

This portrait shares a number of features with the other case studies in this chapter which also combine themes of mourning with the protestant idea of *memoria*, a theory which stressed the educational potential offered by the virtuous dead.<sup>24</sup> In this case as in the Saltonstall portrait which is discussed in the next case study, particular respect is offered to a virtuous wife whose 'good death' in childbirth was a common theme in sculpted memorials.<sup>25</sup> It also shares features with other deathbed portraits of approximately the same date, for example the portraits of Venetia Digby and John Tradescant the Elder (Figs 6:4 and 6:5) where the corpses are depicted as if asleep in a bed surrounded by curtains. In all three cases, but particularly in the case of the female subjects, the reality of death is denied in that they are depicted as serene and beautiful, an idealisation which may have been a way of protecting the living from the shock of sudden death.

The notion of death as a kind of sleep was based on Bible passages and reiterated in literature and sermons in the early modern period.<sup>26</sup> In a sermon of 1681 entitled *Death the sweetest sleep* Thomas Lye for example, urged his congregation, in a reference to the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins:

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<sup>23</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c.1500-c.1800* (1992) pp. 46-49 and Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch'.

<sup>24</sup> Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Judith W. Hurtig, 'Death in Childbirth: Seventeenth-Century English Tombs and Their Place in Contemporary Thought', *The Art Bulletin*, 65, p. 603.

<sup>26</sup> The Bible KJV: I Thessalonians ch. 4 v. 13, 'But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him'.

To have your *Lamp* so fill'd with *Oil*, so fairly *trimm'd*, and clearly *burning*, as that when you come to *die*, you may have nothing else left to do, but to *die*, to die in Christ, to *sleep* in him, and, at his return, *arise*, and live for *ever* with him.<sup>27</sup>

The conflation of death with sleep was a comforting one but contrasts with the deathbed scene of Lady Elizabeth Saltonstall discussed in the next case study where her apparent readiness for death is represented by her opened eyes.



Figure 6:4 British School, *John Tradescant the Elder on his Deathbed*, 1638, oil on canvas, The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford



Figure 6:5 Anthony Van Dyck, *Venetia Lady Digby on her Deathbed*, 1633, oil on canvas, Dulwich Picture Gallery

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Lye 1621-1684, *Death the Sweetest Sleep, or, a Sermon Preach't on the Funeral of Mr. William Hiatt, Late Citizen of London by Tho. Lye*, (1681).



Figure 6:6 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail)

The death of women in childbirth was a common, though nonetheless tragic, occurrence in many families.<sup>28</sup> In the Aston case it was made especially hard because both mother and baby died and because this was Magdalene's fourth child to die, it was her fifth pregnancy which proved fatal.<sup>29</sup> To compound this sad record, their son Thomas, the boy in the portrait, died in 1637 at the age of six and it is to his memory that his mother's memorial tablet in Aston Church is dedicated.<sup>30</sup> The inscribed verse on this tablet is quoted here in full because of the light it casts on the idealisation of Magdalene's memory:

Here, reader, in this sad but glorious cell  
Of death lies [en]shrined a double miracle,  
Of woman and of wife, and each so best,  
She may be fame's fair copy to the rest;  
The virgin here a blush so chaste might learn,  
Till through the blood she virtue did discern;

<sup>28</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*, p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Ormerod and Helsby, *The History of the County Palatine*, p. 724. Ormerod notes that the Aston's second son Robert 'died young' in 1634 while their daughters Jane and Elizabeth also 'died as infants', p. 727.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



Here might the bride upon her wedding day  
At once both know to love and to obey,  
To be but body to her husband's mind;  
The tender mother here might learn such love  
And care as shames the pelican and dove.  
But, fame and truth, no more, for should you find  
Wonder and envy both would make this grave  
Their court, and blast that peace her ashes have.<sup>31</sup>

Such sentiments express in conventional verse the life's course of a virtuous woman, from blushing virgin to loving and obedient wife to tender and pious mother, thence to her death. In describing her death as 'a fair copy to the rest' the verse explicitly points to the didactic function of such memorials.<sup>32</sup> For Sir Thomas outward displays of reverence were closely integrated with inward piety and the posthumous memorial portrait represents an outward show of piety as a means of expressing inward faith, while the essentially patriarchal and conventional content of the verse reflects his views of social order.<sup>33</sup>

Robert Tittler describes John Souch as the 'most prolific, successful, and best-known portrait painter of his time in Chester and its cultural hinterland, extending throughout Flintshire, Denbighshire, southern Lancashire and the rest of Cheshire.'<sup>34</sup> This portrait he regards as 'closer to the conventional, essentially polite portraiture of its time', claiming that it represents local and regional portraiture at a more advanced stage than the portrait of the Cholmondeley sisters,

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<sup>31</sup> Ormerod and Helsby, *The History of the County Palatine*. p. 727.

<sup>32</sup> Sir Thomas's own religious and political views represented 'mainstream conformity', being concerned less with the finer points of doctrinal purity than with changes in the liturgy, which he vehemently resisted: Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p. 142 and p. 131. The pelican is traditionally associated with Christ's willingness to bleed for his 'children' while the dove is associated with Christ's baptism as well as gentleness; for wifely ideals see for example: William Whately, 1583-1639., 'A Bride-Bush, or a Wedding Sermon Compendiously Describing the Duties of Married Persons: By Performing Whereof, Marriage Shall Be to Them a Great Helpe, Which Now Finde It a Little Hell.', (1617).

<sup>33</sup> Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p. 171-2.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Tittler, 'Souch, John (*bap.* 1594, *d.* 1645?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, Sept 2010) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/99722>, accessed 30 April 2017].

which although earlier than the Aston group, shares a similar social and regional context.<sup>35</sup> A significant aspect of Souch's training was his apprenticeship to the Chester painter and Deputy Herald Randle Holme I, whose colour palette and use of heraldry is evident in many of his apprentice's portraits. The connection with the Randle Holmes, and the social contacts that came with it were important in Souch's development, and particularly relevant in the case of the Aston portrait, since it was Holme the younger, as deputy herald for Cheshire, who was responsible for arranging and recording Magdalene Aston's funeral.<sup>36</sup>

The almost life-sized scale and striking use of black and white in the portrait give it an extraordinary power and authority. The figures occupy a sombre space, perhaps a bed chamber or parlour, draped in black velvet which extends from the bed on the right to surround all the figures. This may have been a realistic depiction of the black draped chamber in which Magdalene Aston died and perhaps the bed was the same one in which she had so recently given birth.<sup>37</sup> While she appears to be sleeping and her eyes are closed, her greyish pallor and lips indicate that she is in fact dead.

The three figures attendant on Lady Magdalene, perhaps brought to her bedside to witness her death or mourn, are dressed alike in black with white collars and cuffs. The boy, young Thomas, was only three at the time and is consequently not breeched, although otherwise his clothes mimic his father's, pointing to the fact that as the copy of his father he shares his grief; the large black hat in his right hand signifies that he is his father's heir (Fig. 6:3).<sup>38</sup> A small

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<sup>35</sup> British School, *The Cholmondley Sisters*, c.1600-10, oil on panel, Tate Collection; Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch'. p. 306.

<sup>37</sup> For discussions of the importance of beds in material and literary culture see: Hurtig, 'Death in Childbirth'. p.603; Elizabeth Sharrett, *Beds as Stage Properties in English Renaissance Drama : Materializing the Lifecycle*, Elizabeth Sharrett, (Thesis PhD) (University of Birmingham, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Sir Thomas has a tiny oval jewel, perhaps of amber or garnet which pinned at the front of his collar which may be a betrothal gift or love token from his wife.

parchment cartouche pinned on the wall, to the boy's left, touching the picture edge translates as: 'The little branch of his brother, the glory of his mother, the consolation of his father; aged 3 years 9 months' (Fig. 6:7). Sadly as noted above, he was to be a short-lived consolation.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 6:7 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of cartouche)

The index finger of the boy's right hand which holds the hat points towards a cross-staff or fore-staff which his father also holds and on which are inscribed biblical texts (translated): 'He telleth the number of the stars [Psalm 147]; He set a compass on the face of the deep [Proverbs 8]; Thou has set all the borders of the earth [Psalm 74]; my grief is immeasurable' (Fig. 6:8).<sup>40</sup> While its cross shape may have had Christian connotations, a fore-staff was an

<sup>39</sup> Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch' p. 304; In 1637 Sir Thomas remarried, and had three more children with his second wife Anne Willoughby. Their children were: a son, Willoughby, and two daughters, Magdalene and Mary: Vernon, 'Aston, Sir Thomas'.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304

instrument used at sea for estimating the altitude of the stars.<sup>41</sup> Father and son both hold this object, suggesting their shared grief and, since each of these verses are specifically concerned with the fixity of God's purpose and providence, also articulates their faith.



Figure 6:8 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of cross-staff)

Sir Thomas's left hand rests on what is literally the centre of the portrait, the skull, which is placed on the hood of the empty black velvet draped crib symbolising the dead child and his/her mother and reminding the viewer of their own mortality (Fig. 6:9). While his gaze is turned to the viewer, the hand on the skull seemingly gestures towards the bed. Below the skull, standing out against the black cloth is a Latin inscription which translates: 'He who sows hope in flesh reaps in bones'.<sup>42</sup> This reference, though not a direct biblical quotation paraphrases a

<sup>41</sup> J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary* Vol. VI Follow-Haswed, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 61; translation Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch' p. 303.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

passage in St Paul's letter to the Galatians: 'For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'<sup>43</sup> This sombre message prompts viewers to focus on things of the spirit rather than the flesh to achieve eternal life and combines with the hand gesture, the skull, the absent baby and the bed to stress the links between marriage, conjugal love and death. Pinned to the sash across Sir Thomas's chest is a mourning jewel, another *memento mori* symbol, consisting of a skull, enclosed in a heart shaped silver wreath, beneath which, suspended from a single pearl, is a lock of silver or grey hair, a curious detail, since Lady Aston is clearly dark haired but perhaps suggests the passages of time (see below for further discussion of this detail) (Fig. 6:10).

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<sup>43</sup> Galatians 6:8, The Bible, King James version.



Figure 6:9 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of skull)



Figure 6:10 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of mourning jewel)

Not quite central, but situated above the figure of Sir Thomas is the couple's funeral hatchment – Aston impaling Poultney surrounded with a laurel wreath, which on the left (Aston)

is withered while the right (Poultney) is green (Fig.6:11).<sup>44</sup> Beneath the wreath and inscribed on a leaf on Sir Thomas's side is the message (translated) 'my crown is become barren' while on Lady Aston's side the message translates as 'virtue flourishes after death'. While it seems counterintuitive to a modern audience, this clearly expresses the belief that while father and son must remain on earth to grieve, the virtue of their dead wife and mother endures in heaven, symbolised by the green shoots of the wreath.



Figure 6:11 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of coat of arms)

Behind and to the left of father and son is a table covered with a colourful embroidered cloth, probably of Indo-Portuguese cotton, decorated with a design of an elephant, a hunting scene and a couple embracing (Figs 6:7, 6:12 and 6:13).<sup>45</sup> Sir Thomas's position at court no doubt brought him into contact with merchants and others aware of the emerging markets in the east, a development which was reflected in a fashion for oriental design and taste in domestic decoration; its reproduction in the portrait points to the family's fashionable and educated taste;

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch' p. 304.

such realistic details of furniture are rare at this date. The theme of transience is developed through the imagery of a *vanitas* still life arranged on the table. This consists of an overturned lute, its strings broken, probably signifying that the harmony of the marriage with its orderly family life has been destroyed by death. (Figs 6:14 and 6:15). Beside the lute is a celestial globe which may echo the sentiments expressed in the inscription on the cross-staff about the immeasurability of the stars or may merely signify more worldly matters, Sir Thomas's education and erudition.<sup>46</sup> Both father and son have turned their backs on these signifiers of worldly pleasure, choosing instead to contemplate death, whose presence surrounds them and leads to meditation on their salvation.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> This group of objects is reminiscent of Holbein's Painting *The Ambassadors* with which Souch or Sir Thomas Aston may have been familiar: Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors*, 1533, NPG, [<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-the-ambassadors> accessed July 10 2017]

<sup>47</sup> Thanks to Dr Jonathan Willis for help on this point.





Figure 6:12 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of table covering)



Figure 6:13 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of table covering)



Figure 6:14 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of vanitas)



Figure 6:15 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail of vanitas)

Although hard to decipher in the reproduction, against the black drapes and above the table in the top left hand corner of the portrait, an inscription rehearses its central message.

Translated it reads:

The sorrows of death compassed me [from Psalm 116] in the year of grief, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1635, aged 35. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff comfort me [Psalm 23]<sup>48</sup>

These Psalms are both concerned with comforting the bereaved and suggest that while this portrait is clearly concerned with memorialisation, it also contains explicit reference to the family's traditional faith and their belief in its consolations. There is a presumption that the portrait's audiences would have recognised all these Biblical quotations and understood their significance, giving the portrait an additional didactic function. The use of Latin and the high quality of the inscriptions should come as no surprise bearing in mind John Souch's apprenticeship to Randle Holme and Sir Thomas's education. However, the large scale of this portrait means that the inscriptions are extremely hard to read from a distance, perhaps suggesting the long-term documentary quality of this work something which raises interesting questions about its display and reception and brings it close to being an object which required prolonged meditation on scripture.

The most enigmatic figure in the composition is the seated woman in the bottom right hand corner who has her head resting in her right hand in a traditional posture of mourning, the so-called 'melancholy' pose; her gaze engages the viewer.<sup>49</sup> Like the male figures, she is dressed in mourning and on her left breast is a mourning jewel consisting of a black bow from which is suspended a single pearl, below which hangs a lock of chestnut hair (Fig.6:16). This lady's own hair is strikingly arranged in a mass of black corkscrew curls, her complexion, in contrast to Lady Aston's is fresh and flushed and her lips are painted a clear, living pink. On the third finger of her left hand she has a delicate ring decorated with a tiny heart enclosing a small stone and she holds a handkerchief with a minute lace decoration in the corner (Fig. 6:17).

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<sup>48</sup> Translation, Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch' p. 303.

<sup>49</sup> Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, p. 12



Figure 6:16 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail)



Figure 6:17 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* (detail)

The identity of this enigmatic figure has been the subject of much speculation. Hurtig for example, believes her to be Magdalene Aston as she was in life, arguing that her pose, with her

head in her hand was one commonly used on tombs of women who died in childbirth.<sup>50</sup>

Llewellyn asserts in contrast, that the portrait depicts the natural and the social body of Lady Aston; her natural body lying dead on the bed, while her social body remains in the space of the living family and is represented by the seated figure. He claims:

Souch's theme is the command that death has over the natural body, in contrast with the survival of the soul and the way the body at death can manifest virtue. Magdalene's two bodies occupy the right-hand side of the room; the dead baby is represented by the skull and draped cradle; all three living members of the family are in mourning and the living son is encouraged to contemplate the traditional message of the *memento mori* by means of symbols of mundane existence – the globe, the cross-staff with which to survey the world, and the lute, the strings of which can snap as suddenly as death can strike.<sup>51</sup>

Certainly there are details to suggest that this figure may indeed be Lady Aston's social body, for example both the tiny heart shaped ring and handkerchief may represent gifts from her husband while the plain gold ring round her neck might be her wedding band signifying her continued devotion to her husband. The two locks of hair, the grey one, attached to a *memento mori* skull, worn by her husband, the chestnut, attached to a black ribbon to the seated figure herself, may also suggest, as does the contrasting living and withered laurel on the hatchment, that Sir Thomas remains in his earthly body, consumed by grief and age while his wife 'flourishes after death'.

Treuherz challenges Llewellyn's view, noting that while funeral monuments often portray women who died in childbirth in the 'melancholy' pose, such figures are never represented twice in the same monument, and he also correctly observes that the two women, in particular their hair, are physically distinctive and therefore unlikely to be the same woman.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Treuherz suggests that the seated figure beside the deathbed might be either a sister or

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<sup>50</sup> Hurtig, 'Death in Childbirth', p. 610.

<sup>51</sup> Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>52</sup> Treuherz, 'New Light on John Souch' p. 305.

friend grieving at the foot of the bed. This view is supported by her mourning clothes and jewellery, the handkerchief, which might well signify grief as much as representing a gift. Finally, such figures, of the same sex and rank as the deceased, he argues, were present as mourners at heraldic funerals of the type organised by Souch's master Randle Holme.<sup>53</sup> Treuherz speculates that the figure might be one of Lady Aston's three sisters, perhaps Jane, who married a member of the neighbouring Crewe family and might well have been present at the death.<sup>54</sup> He further draws attention to the order of funeral for Lady Aston in Randle Holme's papers which lists those present in the procession as: '... after the preacher and the corpse carried by knights and gentlemen of the blood, 'Mr Allen and Mrs Browne, Mrs Anne Allen, Mrs Mainwaring, Divers ladies in black, followed by Sir Thomas Aston alone and other', any of whom, argues Treuherz, might be the mourning figure in the portrait.<sup>55</sup>

Supporting Treuherz's argument is the fact that the figure on the bed is clearly dead, to judge by her pose and colour, while the figure in the chair by contrast, is alive but in mourning.<sup>56</sup> Treuherz observes that Llewellyn's identification of the seated figure as Lady Aston's 'social body' is somewhat undermined by the rarity of other examples of such double figures either in funerary monuments or portraits.<sup>57</sup> The identification of the seated figure in the Aston portrait remains problematic, however compelling details such as the locks of hair worn by husband and wife, one grey, one chestnut and the living and decayed leaves in the couple's hatchment point convincingly to Llewellyn's belief that the seated figure is indeed the social body of Magdalen

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 306.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Lady Aston would have been in mourning for her dead child.

<sup>57</sup> In fact there are two figures in the melancholy pose in the deathbed vignette in the Unton portrait of an earlier date.

Aston ‘in the social space of the living, in the company of the representation of her husband and their eldest child Thomas ...’ while her physical body lies dead on the bed.<sup>58</sup>

This discussion has demonstrated that the portrait of *Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* is much more than the ‘polite’ or ‘conventional’ work identified by Tittler. It is rather, a highly sophisticated, extremely detailed and profoundly religious work which is both an expression of sincere grief and a contemplation on mortality, inviting its viewers to examine their faith and comfort one another. It was commissioned by a deeply religious and traditional husband and father who used it to assert his sincerely held belief in God’s providence (See Fig. 6:18). What elevates this portrait beyond conventional expressions of piety are its striking contrasts - of birth and death, word and image, presence and absence, black and white, childhood and maturity, male and female, sleep and wakefulness - all of which heighten the drama of the scene it depicts.

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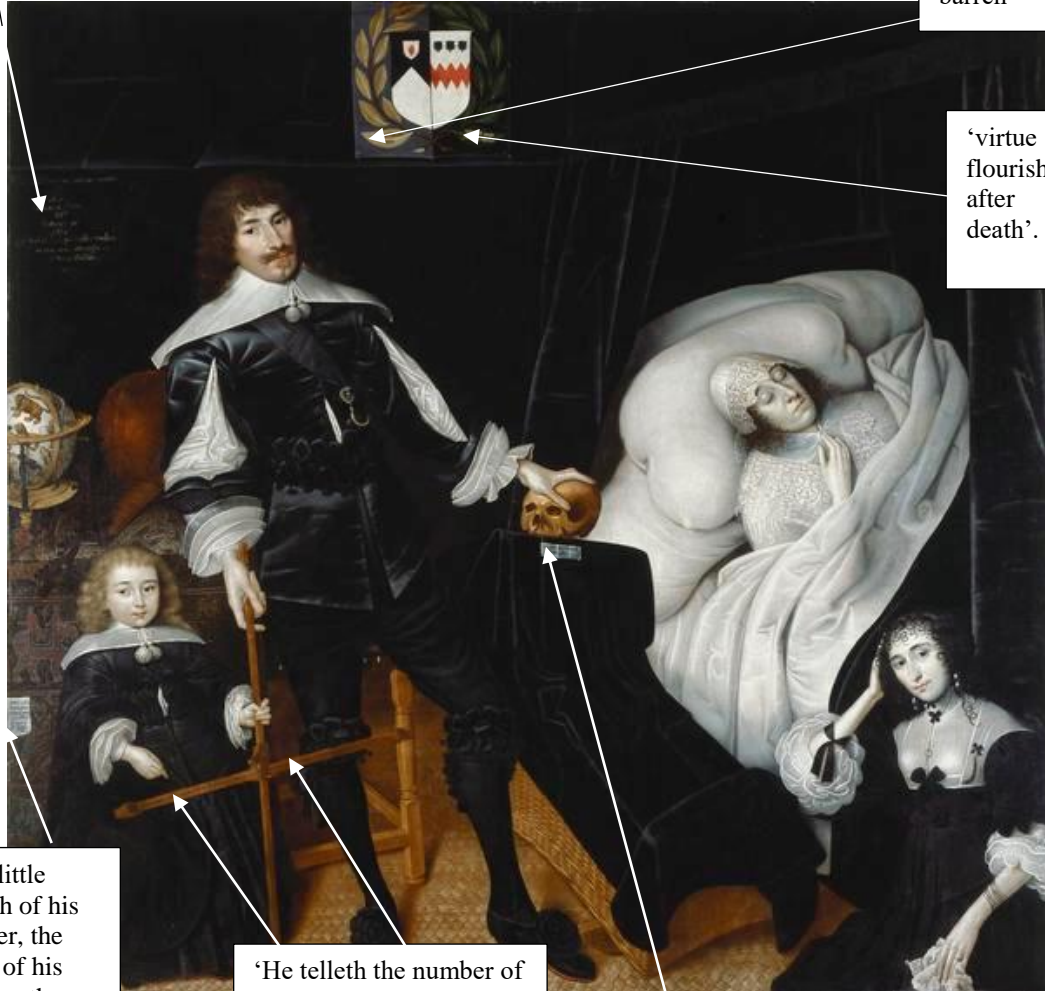
<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

'The sorrows of death compassed me [Psalm 116] in the year of grief, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1635, aged 35. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff comfort me' [Psalm 23]

Figure 6:18 John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife*

'my crown is become barren'

'virtue flourishes after death'.



'The little branch of his brother, the glory of his mother, the consolation of his father; aged 3 years 9 months'

'He telleth the number of the stars [Psalm 147]; He set a compass on the face of the deep [Proverbs 8]; Thou has set all the borders of the earth [Psalm 74]; my grief is immeasurable'

'He who sows hope in flesh reaps in bones' based on Galatians 6:8.



## Case study 2: The Saltonstall Family



Figure 6:19 David des Granges, *The Saltonstall Family*, c. 1641, oil on canvas, Tate Collection, London

This case study offers a new interpretation of the famous portrait known as *The Saltonstall Family*, by David des Granges of 1641 which, it will be argued, recalls the deathbed of the pious gentlewoman, Lady Elizabeth Saltonstall, (née Basse m. 1617), who died in 1630, eleven years before the portrait's completion (Fig. 6:19).<sup>59</sup> It will be asserted that despite its

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<sup>59</sup> Karen Hearn, 'David Des Granges, the Saltonstall Family, c. 1636–7' (April 2008) [<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/des-granges-the-saltonstall-family-t02020> Accessed May 2014]; Thanks to Tate for correspondence of August 11<sup>th</sup> 2014, confirming the attribution, and to Lisa Cole of Gallery Records at Tate for confirming the date of 1641 in email correspondence of 11 August 2014 which supersedes Hearn (2008). This confirmed a date 'at the beginning of the 1640s' noting especially that Sir Richard's shoes are tied with a ribbon, rather than a rosette, a fashion that came in around 1641; Aileen Ribeiro and Valerie Cumming also assign the date of 1641 to this painting on the basis of the costumes, describing it as: 'A provincial family group with money to spend on good clothes, but not in step with the newest fashions.' They point to Sir Richard 'newly fashionable high-crowned hat' as indicating a date in the early 1640s, as do the style of sleeves and hair of the seated figure: Aileen Ribeiro and Valerie Cumming, *The Visual History of Costume* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1989), p.113.

importance and familiarity, this portrait has been insufficiently researched and a new approach will be offered here which builds on the work of Karen Hearn and other scholars whose insights have provided an essential framework for this study, especially relating to the complexity of its dating.<sup>60</sup>

Firstly, this case study places this painting in the context of the Saltonstall's family history; secondly relates it to the seventeenth-century culture of death and memorialisation, specifically to the so-called 'Mothers' Legacy' genre of writing which consisted of religious advice and moral guidance prepared for children by mothers who anticipated that they would die before their children reached maturity.<sup>61</sup> Thirdly, with the texts of this genre in mind, it will be asserted that the chief function of this portrait was to memorialise Elizabeth Saltonstall's piety, presenting her deathbed performance as an exemplar to guide, comfort and instruct her descendants. Furthermore, it will be asserted, this portrait was created not only on the basis of eye-witness accounts of this special death, as a work of memory, but that its commission 'performed' the act of remembrance as 'perpetual prayer'.<sup>62</sup> This supports Jennifer Heller's description of deathbeds as 'rhetorical platform[s]' from which words and gestures carried a special weight of obligation.<sup>63</sup> Finally, this case study will consider the central focus of the work - an enigmatic gesture whereby a glove is dropped into the outstretched hand of the dying woman.

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<sup>60</sup> Hearn, *David Des Granges, The Saltonstall Family*; see also: Jonathan Goldberg, 'Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images', in *Re-Writing the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Maureen Quilligan, Margaret Ferguson, Nancy Vickers (eds), (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 3-31.

<sup>61</sup> Jennifer Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> See Cooper, 'Frail Flesh', p. 201; Gordon and Rist, eds, *The Arts of Remembrance* p.3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p 5.

The portrait depicts Elizabeth's husband, Sir Richard Saltonstall (1596-1649) bringing two of their surviving children, Richard (1622-1688) and Ann (1624-) <sup>64</sup> to witness their mother's death. At the time of her death in 1630, Elizabeth and Richard had another surviving daughter, a second Elizabeth, born in 1623 who died in 1637; possible reasons for her absence from the portrait are discussed below. <sup>65</sup> Richard's second wife Mary (d. 1651) sits at the head of the bed with her new baby, who, it is claimed here is their new daughter who had recently been christened Elizabeth (See Fig. 6:25 for family tree). <sup>66</sup> The period of eleven years between Lady Elizabeth's death and the portrait's completion in 1641 is in stark contrast to the mere seventeen weeks it took between the death of Lady Magdalene Aston and the completion of her portrait. The long period during which Elizabeth's death remained in the memory of her family underlines Astri Erll's view that families are communities of collective memory which are orientated towards the needs and interests of the group in the present. <sup>67</sup> She argues memories are selected and reconstructed so that what is remembered is distorted and shifted, becoming almost fictional. Family memory, she claims, is inter-generational and constituted through ongoing communication between children, parents and grandparents. This means that even those who did

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<sup>64</sup> There were at least four generations of men in the family called Richard, the man in the portrait will be known as Sir Richard (III), his son as Richard (IV). Richard Saltonstall (IV): *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714*, pp. 1297-1322. [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=119385> Date accessed: 26 January 2014]; TNA, PROB11/211/618, Will of Sir Richard Saltonstall of South Ockendon, Essex, 1949; Ann married George Chamberlain in 1651 St Lawrence Jewry and Saint Mary Madalene, Milk St London in 1651 LMO, LAW1/A/002/MS06975.

<sup>65</sup> LMA, Register of St Gregory By St Paul, 8 May 1623; ERO/D/P/159/1/1, 'Register of Baptisms Marriages and Burials for St Nicholas Church South Ockendon, 1538-1783, '1637 April 28 Elizabeth daughter of Sir Richard Saltonstall Knight'.

<sup>66</sup> This baby Elizabeth Saltonstall was baptised on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1641: ERO/D/P/159/1/1, 'Register of Baptisms Marriages and Burials for St Nicholas Church South Ockendon, 1538-1783; other scholars have identified this child as Richard and Mary Saltonstall's first child, Phillip who would in fact have been six years old in 1641: see for example Jonathan Goldberg, 'Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images', in *Re-Writing the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Maureen Quilligan, Margaret Ferguson, Nancy Vickers, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 18; Hearn, 'David Des Granges, the Saltonstall Family', identifies this baby as either Phillip or John [<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/des-granges-the-saltonstall-family-t02020> Accessed July 2017].

<sup>67</sup> See: Astri Erll, 'Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42 (2011), p. 306-307.

not experience events first hand can share in a memory through an exchange between eyewitnesses and descendants which can go back as far as the oldest members of the group can remember.<sup>68</sup> This portrait, as argued here, is composed out of that shifting and distorting lens of family memory.

*The Saltonstall Family* depicts a chamber filled with a large bed, on which lies the pallid figure of Elizabeth Saltonstall attended by her two surviving children and her husband's second wife Mary who holds their baby daughter Elizabeth, born the year of the commission.<sup>69</sup> By 1641, the date of the portrait, Richard and Mary had been married for six years and had three sons, Philip, John and Bernard who were not included in the portrait.<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth's left hand reaches out towards her two children and simultaneously opens to receive a glove from her husband. The intimate and emotionally charged nature of this portrait suggests that it originally hung in either the parlour, a room used by the family for everyday eating and leisure activities, or the bed chamber which was the normal location for rites associated with the lifecycle, such as birth and death.<sup>71</sup> It is likely that in common with other families of their religious persuasion, the Saltonstalls used rooms at the heart of family life, either the parlour or bedchamber for household devotions. Andrew Cambers draws attention to a specific kind of devotional family reading which took place around the godly deathbed, highlighting the familial, communal and

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth and Richard's second surviving child, another Elizabeth was born in 1623, between Richard and Ann, 1623, Register of St Gregory By St Paul, London Met Archives and died in 1637: ERO, D/P/159/1/1, Register of Baptisms Marriages and Burials for St Nicholas Church South Ockendon, 1538-1783.

<sup>70</sup> Philip Saltonstall was baptised in 1635: ERO D/P/159/1/1, Register of Baptisms Marriages and Burials for St Nicholas Church South Ockendon, 1538-1783, John Saltonstall: See Powell (ed), 'Chafford Hundred, ERO D/P/159/1/1, Bernard Saltonstall London Metropolitan Archives, St Dunstan in the East, Composite Register 1558-1653.

<sup>71</sup> Hamling, "An Arelome to This Hous", p. 74. Nicholas Cooper notes that by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the function of parlours had acquired a range of uses including everyday family dining and entertaining and frequently contained beds, see: Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, (New Haven ; London: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in association with English Heritage by Yale University Press, 1999). pp.289-292.

performative nature of the act of dying.<sup>72</sup> It is possible therefore, that this painting represents the room in which it was originally hung, perhaps the one in which family devotions took place and in which Elizabeth Saltonstall died.

The luxurious furnishing, bold use of reds, flame and gold in the Saltonstall group contrast with the sombre black draped walls of the room in which Magdalene Aston died. Karen Hearn notes that: “The red hangings of the great bed are a sign of wealth and high status, but also give a celebratory rather than a sombre air to this grand dynastic image.”<sup>73</sup> This branch of the Saltonstall family, from South Ockendon in Essex, were extremely wealthy and among the leading exporters of cloth to the Low Countries, trading with northern Europe, Spain, Turkey, Russia and the Levant.<sup>74</sup> Textiles are on show everywhere in the portrait, displaying the source of the family’s wealth and their fashionable taste. Between the left hand woodland scene and the frame of the painting are panels surrounded with bamboo and painted with care, depicting tulips, orange and white lilies, honeysuckle, narcissus and other flowers in a pattern of twining foliage in vibrant colours which may symbolise the ties of family, their extensive trading links, or more speculatively may be a *vanitas* still life (Fig.6:20).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 39-118; *Ibid.*, p 55.

<sup>73</sup> Hearn, *David Des Granges*.

<sup>74</sup> Ian W. Archer, ‘Saltonstall, Sir Richard (1521?–1601)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24580>, Web. accessed 13 May 2016]. This branch of the family also held land in Chipping Warden, Northamptonshire.

<sup>75</sup> Hans van Miegroet notes that the tulip was especially popular in Netherlandish *vanitas* paintings owing to its short flowering season and the fact that it was the centre of a spectacular financial crash in 1637, where it came to represent the dangers of financial greed and speculation: Hans J Van Miegroet, *Vanitas*, *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. (Oxford University Press, Accessed 8 Jan. 2017); Hearn suggests that the close attention with which all the textiles are painted indicates that they represent actual fabrics rather than ‘composite ones’, Hearn, *David des Granges*.



Figure 6:20 The Saltonstall Family, (detail)

The portrait is dominated by the standing figure of Sir Richard Saltonstall, his head slightly inclined and his gaze focussed on his second wife seated to the right of the bed, his face is cast in a sombre expression. He has removed the glove from his right hand into which his oldest son, Richard lays the fingers of his left hand in a delicate gesture which simultaneously suggests his position as his father's heir and points to a level of intimacy and trust between them (Fig.6:21). The boy has not been breeched so he is probably depicted at about six years old, although in 1641, he would in reality have been about nineteen years old and eight when his mother died, since he was born in 1622. Discussion of this curious discrepancy is provided below.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Breeching was the transitional moment in boys' lives when they moved from wearing skirts to breeches, usually at about six years old.



Figure 6:21 *The Saltonstall Family* (detail)

Young Richard grasps the wrist of his sister Ann, born two years after him in 1624 and was therefore about seventeen years old in 1641, although she is depicted at about four years old. Their father half turns away from his children, apparently caught in the moment before he drops his glove into the outstretched hand of his dying first wife, while holding or drawing back the curtain surrounding her bed (Fig. 6:24). The use of curtains or drapes to separate the living and the dead was a common symbolic device in funerary monuments and portraits in this period and here, Sir Richard appears to be ‘showing’ or revealing the figure on the bed. She wears a night gown and cap around her chalk white face rather than a shroud, which together with her open



eyes indicate that she is on her deathbed rather than prepared for her grave.<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth's pallor suggests that she is near the moment of death with her gaze fixed upwards and to the left of the frame as if to a corner of the room.

Seated upright on an armchair to the right of the bed, her gaze also focussed out of the frame is Sir Richard's second wife, Mary, formerly Mary Parker, who holds her new-born child, swaddled and wrapped in a christening gown: "edged with broad silver gilt bobbin lace and spangles."<sup>78</sup> The figures of Sir Richard, his two wives and the new baby are framed by the geometric, dark orange/red outline of the bed and the back of the chair to form a separate group within the picture frame. To the right side of this inner frame, the heads of the two wives and the new baby are in close proximity, drawing attention to their central role in this portrait's narrative and suggesting their relationship as wives of the same man (Fig. 6:22). The compositional function of the bed, which both encloses this group and forms the largest block of colour, emphasises its symbolic importance, simultaneously representing the marital bed, the death bed and perhaps the birthing bed. The close association between birth and death in the minds of early modern people was not simply due to the high mortality of women in childbirth but because to the godly, death was a kind of birth into a new life.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The way her cap is tightly wrapped round her face is unusual, other deathbed portraits of the period show the dead or dying person wearing a cap with their hair or beard showing and propped on pillows as if they were asleep: Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Venetia, *Lady Digby, on her Deathbed*, 1633, oil on canvas, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London; British School, John Tradescant *the Elder on his Deathbed*, 1638, Oil on canvas, Collection The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology; John Souch, *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife*, 1635, oil on canvas, Manchester Art Gallery.

<sup>78</sup> Hearn, *David des Granges*.

<sup>79</sup> Lucinda M. Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 12.





Figure 6:22 *The Saltonstall Family* (detail)

The two women represent Sir Richard Saltonstall's two wives and not, as has sometimes been claimed in relation to the portrait of Sir Thomas Aston's wife (case study one), the 'natural' and social bodies of the same woman.<sup>80</sup> These two women have distinctly different eye colours and the South Ockendon parish register and various family wills, separately record their life

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<sup>80</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c.1500-c.1800* (1992) pp. 46-49.

events and deaths.<sup>81</sup> The imagined scene of the dying woman and her attendants represents a particular form of protestant piety, one closely associated with the roles of women as mothers.<sup>82</sup> Lady Elizabeth Saltonstall was about thirty-two when she died, the cause of which has not been possible to ascertain; but had it been in childbirth, her death would have been considered especially virtuous and in line with St Paul's words "that women will be saved through child-bearing, provided she continues in faith, love, holiness and virtue".<sup>83</sup>

For devout or godly Protestants like the Saltonstalls the deathbed performance was remembered and recorded, becoming part of a family's collective memory and used to comfort the living and strengthen their faith.<sup>84</sup> The genre of writing known as 'mother's legacy' took the form of letters, diaries and godly ballads containing prayers, moral advice and guidance and even political commentary. These written legacies were left by mothers for their unborn children and invariably believed to be their last words, written in the event of their death.<sup>85</sup> Among the best known of the legacy writers was Elizabeth Jocelin who in a letter to her husband which forms the preamble to her address to her unborn child, is explicit about its purpose:

Mine own dear love, I no sooner conceived an hope that I should be made a mother by thee, but with it entered the consideration of a mother's duty, and shortly after followed the apprehension of danger that might prevent me from executing that care I so exceedingly desired, I mean in religious training of our child.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> ERO D/P/159/1/1 'Register of Baptisms Marriages and Burials for St Nicholas Church South Ockendon' records Elizabeth's death; PROB11/308/208 Will of Dame Mary Saltonstall of South Ockendon, Essex. shows that they were two distinct women with different death dates.

<sup>82</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, 'The Puritan Death-Bed, c.1560-c.1660', in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700*, ed. by Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 122-44.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*; "'Saved through Childbearing": A Godly Context for Elizabethan Pregnancy Portraits', in *Art Re-Formed Re-Assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), p. 66.

<sup>84</sup> Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), especially pp.57-80; Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*; Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacy to Her Unborn Child*. ed. by Thomas Goad, (Oxford, 1684); For account of pious death see: M. Cross, 'The Third Earl of Huntingdon's Death-Bed: A Calvinist Example of the Ars Moriendi', *Northern History*, 21 (1985), 80-107.

<sup>85</sup> Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*, p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacy*.

For such believers, the deathbed performance was of central importance in the construction of a 'good' death, and the move from physical to spiritual existence was closely observed and reported on by friends and family who hoped for the salvation of their loved one's soul.<sup>87</sup> What makes the image of Lady Elizabeth on her deathbed one of particular piety, is that although she apparently lies dying, her eyes are open, and uplifted and she appears watchful, patient and ready, lying in a liminal state between life and death (Fig. 6:22). In his popular manual on practical piety *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying* (1651) Jeremy Taylor advises that: 'He that would die well, must always look for Death, every day knocking at the gates of the grave, and then the gates of the grave shall never prevail on him to do him mischief.'<sup>88</sup>

Heller notes that legacy writers frequently portray themselves as dead women among the living only remaining alive long enough to leave advice for their children.<sup>89</sup> Preparation for death was considered the duty of the pious who should make themselves ready for their end with their earthly affairs in order. With her hand outstretched towards her children Elizabeth both blesses them and assigns their care to her husband, thereby demonstrating her preparedness and indicating that her children's future care is her chief concern.<sup>90</sup> The raised eyes of both the adult Elizabeth and her new-born namesake represent heavenly aspiration, as Lucinda Becker notes: "The movement of eyes and body to heaven is commonplace in accounts of dying women and part of the process by which a woman could effectively become sanctified prior to death as the mourners sought to interpret her last actions as proof of her suitability for heaven."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* especially chapter 5, 'Women Dying Well', pp.103-121.

<sup>88</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy dying*, (1651, Printed London, 1715), p. 37.

<sup>89</sup> Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Houlbrooke, 'The Puritan Death-Bed'; Rylie, *Being Protestant*, p. 463-464 for discussion of visions of heaven.

<sup>91</sup> Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, p.62.

What this case study has argued is that this portrait depicts a remembered or imagined scene when Richard and Ann, as small children were brought to their mother's bedside by their father to witness the manner of her death so that she could be both an example to them and offer the comfort of her confident faith. This 'remembered' aspect explains the discrepancy around the ages of the children, who are depicted around two years younger than they actually were when their mother died in 1630.

As Houlbrooke notes: "The presence of large numbers of people at the death-bed was thought to be a good thing. They could not only help the dying, but also learn salutary lessons from the experience themselves."<sup>92</sup> Married women were seldom allowed to make wills, but deathbeds or prolonged periods of illness before death could sometimes provide the opportunity for them to make nuncupative or spoken wills in which their wishes could be recorded.<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth's gesture, whether of blessing or assigning her children's care, can be seen in this context.

A simple brass plaque in St Nicholas's Church, South Ockendon commemorates Elizabeth's death and burial, placing her memory in a sacred space and providing another opportunity for her family to contemplate her death. The wording of the plaque: 'The Lady Elizabeth Saltonstall her body anno domini 1630' suggests her burial in the church. The record of her death in the South Ockendon burial register underlines her perceived piety. It reads: "1630 Maye 6. The Lady Elizabeth Saltonstall the wife of Sir Richard Saltonstall who departed the life 2i day of April:"<sup>94</sup> Unusually for this register, the clerk added: *virtute vivunt mortui* (the virtuous

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<sup>92</sup> Houlbrooke, 'The Puritan Death-Bed' p.123.

<sup>93</sup> Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, p.29.

<sup>94</sup> ERO D/P/159/1/1 Register of Baptisms Marriages and Burials for St Nicholas Church South Ockendon. 1538, 1630.

live to die), an addition which highlights Elizabeth's particular piety and preparedness for death, as Houlbrooke notes:

Earthly life was a long process of dying. Its most important aim should be to prepare oneself for the far more important life hereafter. The thought was expressed in countless pithy axioms and epigrams such as 'Live to die, and die to live eternally' or 'Death is the gateway to life.'<sup>95</sup>

The sentiments expressed by mothers in the legacy texts are reiterated in a seventeenth-century ballad named: *A Hundred Godly Lessons*.<sup>96</sup> The woodcuts which accompany this ballad depict a woman in her bedchamber on the left-hand page, where she is shown sitting upright on her deathbed, with her arms upraised in either prayer or blessing. Surrounding her bed, the figures of her husband and children gaze at their mother as they stand in attitudes of prayer (Fig. 6:23). The right-hand page depicts a woman and a man, perhaps her husband, in conversation. The text, designed to be sung, offers advice and guidance on matters of morality, behaviour and piety, the final verse concludes:

By this dear children you may learn,  
how to direct your ways,  
To God, to Prince, to Common-wealth,  
whereon your welfare stays.  
Print well in your remembrance,  
the Lessons I have shown,  
Then shall you live in happy state,  
when I am dead and gone.

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<sup>95</sup> Houlbrooke, 'Puritan Death-Bed', p.129.

<sup>96</sup> Unknown author, *A Hundred Godly Lessons. / That a Mother on her Death-bed gave to her Children, whereby they may know how to guide themselves towards God and Man, / to the benefit of the Common-wealth, joy of their Parents, and good of themselves* (Printed for F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright and J. Clarke, 1674-1679) Collection, University of Glasgow Library – Euing. Source English Broadside Ballad Archive, University of California at Santa Barbara. Standard Tune: Wigmore's Galliard: [<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31851/player> Accessed Jan 2017].

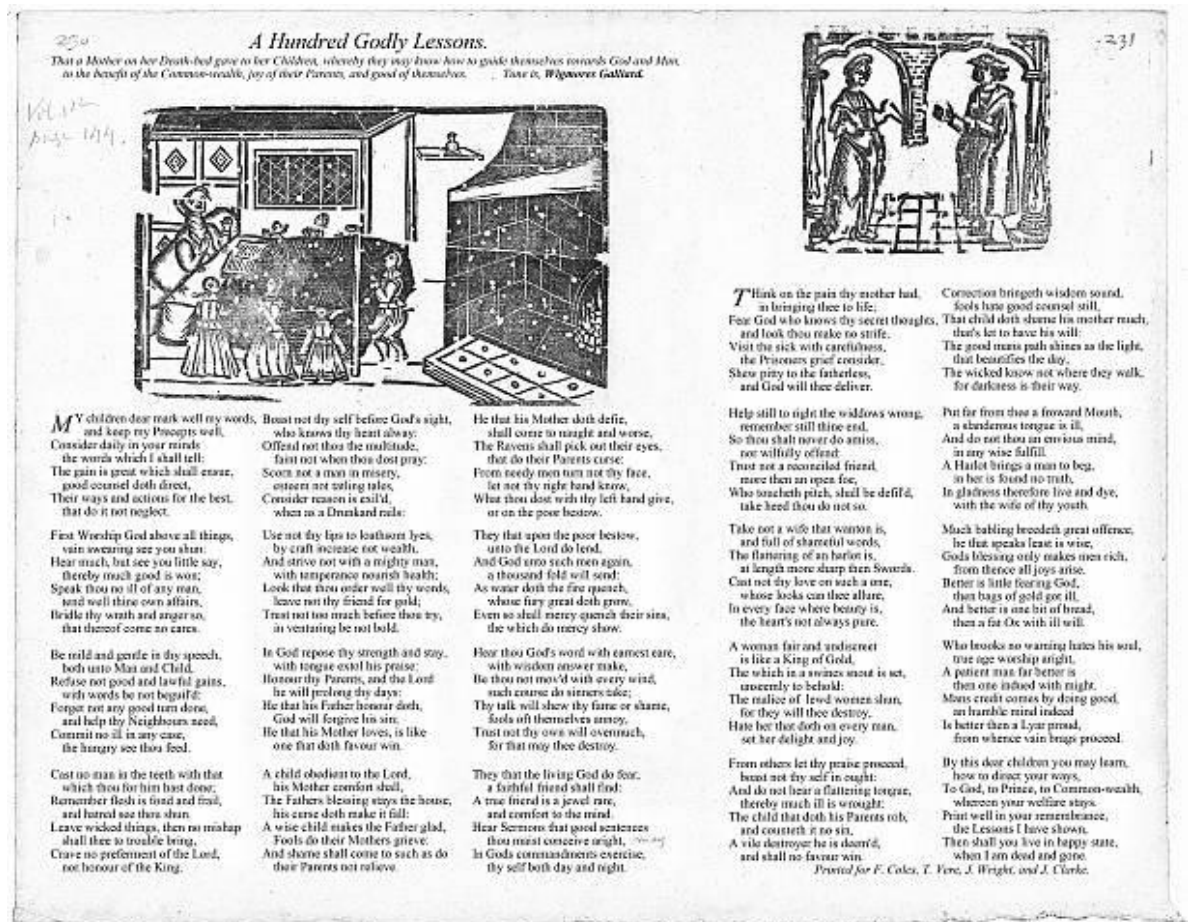


Figure 6:23 *A Hundred Godly Lessons. That a Mother on her Death Bed Gave to her Children ...*, woodcut, English Broadside Ballads Archive IDL 31851, University of Glasgow Library - Euing 143

This case study has shown that *The Saltonstall Family* is a portrait of complexity and ambiguity however the interpretation offered here depends on the fact that the baby in the portrait was Elizabeth, daughter of Richard and Mary, who was born in 1641, the earliest date indicated by Tate for the completion of this portrait (see family tree Fig.6:25. This date suggests that the new baby, depicted in her christening gown, was the third Elizabeth in the family, perhaps named both for her dying step-mother and her older half-sister Elizabeth who, as noted, died in 1637 at the age of fourteen. In the portrait, the newly delivered Mary appears to be ‘offering’ or presenting the recently christened baby Elizabeth to her dying namesake (Fig. 6:22). As noted above Sir Richard and his second wife had three surviving sons before the new

Elizabeth was born, their absence from the portrait points to the significance of their new daughter and the joy which her arrival brought to the Saltonstall family may account for the celebratory red bed hangings.<sup>97</sup> The practice of naming a new baby after a dead sibling was relatively common; in this case the new Elizabeth would have been named after both her dead step-mother and step-sister.<sup>98</sup> If this is correct, it seems likely that the portrait was commissioned, perhaps jointly by Sir Richard and Mary, as a way of memorialising the piety of his first wife and celebrating the birth of their new Elizabeth and perhaps the hope that the qualities of her dead step-mother might be reborn in the new baby.

This interpretation of the portrait, which memorialises female piety, challenges Jonathan Goldberg's analysis that this was a conventional patriarchal image.<sup>99</sup> In his paper of 1986, 'Fatherly Authority ...' Goldberg uses this portrait among others, to argue that the paintings and engravings of the period were part of a system of social control whereby patriarchy was justified as being ordained by god and part of the natural order of things.<sup>100</sup> Of this portrait in particular he says: 'The painting is a kind of genealogical chart, suggesting the place of natural production in the patriarchal family, the family line is symbolised by the joined hands which describe a line rising to the top hat of the father.'<sup>101</sup> While accepting Goldberg's argument that this portrait is one of orthodox patriarchy, this case study has offered a reading which pays closer attention to the Saltonstall's family history and to assertions elsewhere in this thesis that wives were able to

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<sup>97</sup> Whatever their joy, it was to be short-lived because the next two children born to Richard and Mary, Henry and Caltrop, born in 1643 and 44 respectively, both died within a year: ERO D/P/159/1/1 Burials 1643 April 8 "Henry sonne of Sir Richard Saltonstall and Mary his wife"; ERO D/P/159/1/1 Burials 1644 June 1 Calthrop Saltonstall of Sir Richard Saltonstall and Mary his wife".

<sup>98</sup> Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* p.37.

<sup>99</sup> Goldberg, 'Fatherly Authority'.

<sup>100</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, 'Fatherly Authority: The Politics of Stuart Family Images', in *Re-Writing the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Maureen Quilligan, Margaret Ferguson, Nancy Vickers, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 3-31.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

claim considerable authority for themselves by asserting their virtue and piety while remaining within accepted patriarchal norms.<sup>102</sup>

The final part of this case study examines the intriguing detail at the centre of the Saltonstall portrait where a glove appears to be dropping from the hand of Sir Richard into that of his dead or dying wife (Fig. 6:24). It is proposed that this elegant white glove is typical of many given as wedding or betrothal gifts in the period, what Thomas Dekker called: ‘The innocent white wedding gloves’, and that this glove might represent one given at the couple’s wedding.<sup>103</sup> Sir Richard appears to be about to drop the glove into his dying wife’s receptive palm and in that gesture, perhaps, bids farewell both to her and to their married life. As common gifts at weddings and funerals, the glove may be a poignant signifier of both marriage and death and as such, contains within it both tenderness and sorrow, emotions reflected in Sir Richard’s sorrowful expression. Annemarieke Willemsen notes that portraits of married couples often depict husbands and wives with their gloves removed to symbolise their familiarity and intimacy.<sup>104</sup> As he drops the glove into the hand of his dying wife, he simultaneously gestures with his left arm and looks towards his second wife, Mary and their new baby as if suggesting hope for the future.

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<sup>102</sup> For example: Laura Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson, 2012); Gowing, ‘The Politics of Women’s Friendship in Early Modern England’, in *Love, Friendship, and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800* ed. Michael Hunter Laura Gowing, Miri Rubin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 131-49; Naomi J. Miller, and Naomi Yavneh, *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World : Sisters, Brothers and Others* (Aldershot, England, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix or the Untrussing of the Humorous Poet*, Act 1 scene i. In *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed., Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

<sup>104</sup> Annemarieke Willemsen, ‘The Geoff Egan Memorial Lecture 2013, Taking up the glove: finds, uses and meanings of gloves, mittens and gauntlets in western Europe, c. AD 1300–1700’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 49: p. 17.





Figure 6:24 *The Saltonstall Family*, (detail of glove)

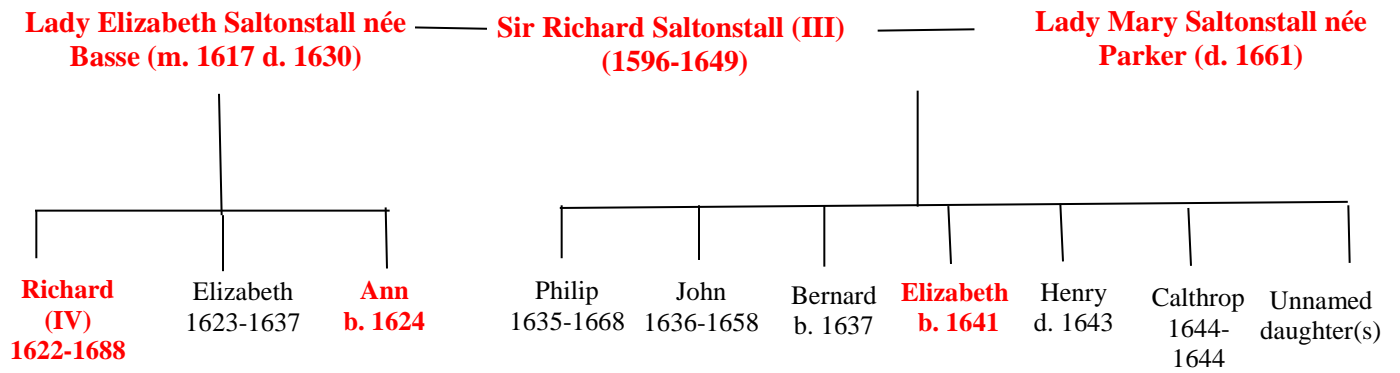
This case study has argued that this portrait memorialised a particular half-remembered, half-imagined moment when the pious Elizabeth Saltonstall lay on her deathbed hovering between life and death. Her deathbed performance, it is asserted, illustrated a particular form of protestant piety, one of preparation and confidence in her salvation. The eleven years between her death and the portrait's completion, coupled with the presence of both Sir Richard's wives and the new baby Elizabeth, born of his second marriage, apparently represents a joyous memory which counterbalanced the sorrow of death. Over and above this, the eleven year gap between Elizabeth's death and the commissioning of the portrait suggests that this was not merely the reconstruction of memories, its strong performative elements such as the dropping glove and the

audience of children, suggest that it was itself commissioned as an act of remembrance, part of the duty of Christians to perform actions in order to 'do remembrance'.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Gordon and Rist, *The Arts of Remembrance*, p.3.

**Figure 6:25 The Saltonstall family tree**  
**Members included in the portrait are highlighted in red**



### Case study 3: The deaths of children: the Streatfeild family



Figure 6:26 William Dobson, *Portrait of a Family, probably that of Richard Streatfeild*, c. 1645, oil on canvas, Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven, USA

Death in childhood was common in early modern England, where between one in five and six of all babies in the early seventeenth century died before their first birthday.<sup>106</sup> This case study explores some of the ways in which these deaths were recorded in family portraits. While these sad events were commonly recorded in sculpted effigies in churches they are rare in family portraits and this discussion therefore relies on only a few examples.<sup>107</sup> The scarcity of these portraits might account for the fact that they appear to have no standard iconography; each

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<sup>106</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 7-8.

<sup>107</sup> Many portraits of children without their parents do survive from the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods and it is possible that some of these may have been memorials, however they are outside the scope of this thesis.

family, it seems developed its own idiosyncratic response to these tragedies, including for example, Sir Thomas Aston, who represented his dead child symbolically through a skull and black draped crib.

The rarity of these portraits probably also accounts for the relative absence of scholarly research on the subject which is limited to references in general accounts of early modern visual culture or death.<sup>108</sup> Accounts of the deaths of children and their parents' responses to the tragedies are, however common in textual sources including letters, diaries, poems and plays which reveal the depth of grief felt by parents and the consolation they found in faith and the hope of their children's resurrection.<sup>109</sup> The poet and playwright Ben Jonson for example expressed unrestrained grief at the loss of his seven-year old son which was only assuaged by his belief in God's justice:

Seven years thou'wert lent to me, and I thee pay,  
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.  
O, could I lose all father now! For why  
Will man lament the state he should envy?  
To have so soon 'scap'd world's and flesh's rage,  
And, if no other misery, yet age?  
Rest in soft peace, and, ask'd, say here doth lie  
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.  
For whose sake, henceforth, all his vows be such,  
As what he loves may never like too much.<sup>110</sup>

Alec Ryrie notes how for Protestants, mourning the deaths of family members and friends was part of the practice of their piety and an expression of submission to God's will, a view supported by Ralph Houlbrooke who notes the frequent emphasis on patience and submission,

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<sup>108</sup> For example: Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.358-362; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>109</sup> See for example Nehemiah Wallington, 'The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654 : A Selection', ed. by David Booy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>110</sup> Ben Johnson, 'On My First Son' [<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44455>].

noting that like adults, children could die a ‘good’ death which could even be seen as ‘joyful’.<sup>111</sup>

While for some grief was constrained by faith, for others there was a sense that grieving excessively was a sign of insufficient faith in God's providence where ‘inner emotions’ were expected to be contained within an ‘outward tranquillity’, a response, possibly framed by Christian Stoicism.<sup>112</sup>

While there is no standard iconography in images of dead children, they do share some features with sculpted monuments in churches and have similar themes. For example, depiction of dead babies, tightly wrapped in their swaddling bands is found both in monuments and painted portraits such as the Hill portrait and the portrait of Richard Towneley and his family discussed above; in both examples the dead babies remain within the family group as if they were still alive. Two rare stoneware memorials to a dead child, intended for domestic display, are the touching hand-made stoneware models of Lydia Dwight who is depicted both in death, prepared for her grave, and as her resurrected self (Figs 6:27 and 6:28).<sup>113</sup> These two memorials were commissioned by Lydia's father from his Fulham pottery in a touching attempt to keep his daughter's memory alive and offer the family the consolation which their faith in her resurrection would bring. This confidence is expressed through the laurel wreath surrounding the skull at the base of her standing figure and by her other-worldly appearance (Fig. 6:28). As with memorial

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<sup>111</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke 1560-1700, ‘The Puritan Death-Bed, c. 1560-c.1660’, in *The Culture of English Puritanism*, ed. by Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 141.

<sup>112</sup> David Bagchi, “‘The Scripture Moveth Us in Sundry Places’: Framing Biblical Emotions in the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Homilies*”, in *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. by Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 48; See also Houlbrooke *Death, Religion and the Family*, Ch. 8 ‘Grief and Mourning’ pp. 220-245.

<sup>113</sup> V&A, ‘Lydia Dwight Dead, Lydia Dwight Resurrected’, (May 2017 ),  
[<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77368/lydia-dwight-dead-figure-john-dwights-fulham/>;  
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8070/lydia-dwight-resurrected-figure-dwight-john/#>, Accessed May 2017].

portraits to dead adult family members, the sorrow of death is here softened by the consolations of faith.



Figure 6:27 John Dwight's Fulham Pottery, *Lydia Dwight Dead*, stoneware, hand-modelled salt-glazed, 1674, Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 6:28 John Dwight's Fulham Pottery, *Lydia Dwight Resurrected*, stoneware, hand-modelled salt-glazed, 1674, Victoria and Albert Museum

More than half a century before Lydia Dwight's memorial figure, a touching portrait (Fig. 6:29) of 1600 from Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk shares many of the same details. It is painted in oil on panel and depicts a dead child whose clothes suggest the parents' wealth, but who, like Lydia is represented in death as if merely in bed, asleep with eyes closed, head on the pillow and the sheets pulled up. The strewn flowers suggest childhood innocence and sweetness or perhaps a funeral wreath. Here as with Lydia, the cruel reality of death is concealed beneath the pretence of sleep (see Case Study One for discussion of relationship between sleep and death in portraits).



Figure 6:29 English School, *A Deceased Child, Garlanded, and Lying Recumbent*, c. 1600, oil on panel, National Trust Collection, Oxburgh Hall, Swaffham, Norfolk

This case study now draws attention to one unusual portrait where the dead child is represented as if she had been resurrected and remains within the family group. It is the rarely studied portrait of the Streatfeild family of Chiddingstone in Kent, dated to about 1645, now in the Yale Centre for British Art in New Haven, U.S.A. (Fig. 6:26)<sup>114</sup> A terrible sense of grief

<sup>114</sup> Thanks to the Yale Centre for British Art for privileged access to this portrait and its related paperwork; The Streatfeild portrait was first attributed to Dobson 1957 and briefly discussed in the Burlington Magazine of the same



inhabits this unfinished portrait which is one of the last works attributed to the artist William Dobson. Its sombre tones, limited colour palette and stark lighting combine with the melancholy expressions of the parents to produce what Malcolm Rogers refers to as ‘explicitly a portrait of mourning’.<sup>115</sup> In this portrait, as Malcolm Warner and Julia Marciari Alexander argue, viewers are compelled to

... read into the picture meanings of mourning; loss, and even, perhaps, a stoic faith in providence. Ultimately the portrait conveys the realities – both affectionate and disturbing – of family life in mid-seventeenth-century England.<sup>116</sup>

Dobson’s technique adds to the sombre atmosphere of the work because he painted directly onto unprimed canvas which can muddy pigments, producing drab colours and thin paint, in this, Rogers also sees the declining energy of Dobson’s work at this date as a reflection of the deterioration of the royalist cause by 1645.<sup>117</sup> The artist appears to have left Oxford at about the same time as the King in the spring of 1646, and returned to London where he apparently intended to continue his career. His death in October that year at the very young age of thirty five was unexpected and unexplained and he died a poor man.<sup>118</sup> The Streatfeild portrait was either one of the last he painted in Oxford, or one of the few he executed on his return to London.

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year, Warner and Alexander consider it further in *This Other Eden*, where it is selected for their particular attention: Anon, ‘Some Little-Known Portraits at the Royal Academy’, *Burlington Magazine*, 99 (1957), pp. 24-29; Malcolm Warner and Julia Marciari Alexander, *This Other Eden: British Paintings from the Paul Mellon Collection at Yale* (New Haven Connecticut: Yale Centre for British Art, 1998) pp. 32-34.

<sup>115</sup> Malcolm Rogers catalogued this portrait in 1983-4 as: ‘In part by William Dobson’. Malcolm Rogers, *William Dobson 1611-46* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1983) p. 67 and there is still some insecurity about the authorship, provenance and identity of the sitters in this portrait.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Gibson, ‘Dobson, William’, *ODNB*, 2004; Dobson was nominated as a steward of the painter-stainers’ company in August 1646, *Ibid.*

The Streatfeild family were among the Kentish gentry who supported the King during the Civil War, regarded by Alan Everitt as minor or parochial gentry who married and did business with similarly ranked local families generally described as ‘yeomen’ or ‘gentlemen’, many of whom had commercial interests in both agriculture and iron working.<sup>119</sup> It may never be known for certain how Richard and Anne Streatfeild came to know William Dobson, however it is possible that as iron masters they were in Oxford to supply the garrisoned town where there was a foundry set up in Christ Church and high demand for skilled iron workers to make arms and ammunition.<sup>120</sup>

The central figures in the portrait have been identified as Richard Streatfeild (d.1676), his wife Anne (d.1693) and three of their children.<sup>121</sup> Their oldest, Henry born 1639, stands on the viewers’ left; next to him is their second daughter Alice probably born 1644/5.<sup>122</sup> The curious half-smiling child, draped in a toga-like gown on the right is probably their first daughter Susanna, born in 1641/2 but who died the following year. William Berry records that this child ‘died an infant’ although she is portrayed at the age of about three.<sup>123</sup> Her mother’s right index finger points to this child in a gesture which suggests that she is the focus of both the portrait and her parents’ grief. Susanna’s otherworldly costume and expression imply that, like Elizabeth Saltonstall, she was painted from memory. Her strange smile and costume suggest that like Lydia

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<sup>119</sup> See P. Laslett, ‘The Gentry of Kent in 1640’, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, ix (1948), pp. 148-64; A. Everitt, *Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660* (Leicester Univ. Press, 1966), p. 34 and Ann Hughes, ‘The King, the Parliament and the Localities During the English Civil War’, in *The English Civil War*, ed. by Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 261-87; KHLc,U908/T257/2 Marriage settlement of Richard Streatfeild and Anne Terry; KHLc,U908/T263 Marriage settlement of William Woodgate of Chiddingstone, yeoman and Alice, daughter of Richard Streatfeild of Chiddingstone, gent; KHLc,U908/T306/1 Probate copy of the will of Richard Streatfeild, 1668.

<sup>120</sup> Roy and Reinhart, ‘Oxford and the Civil War’, pp. 706-7.

<sup>121</sup> They eventually had seven; five boys and two girls, William Berry, *County Genealogies : Pedigrees of the Families in the County of Kent* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, printed by W. Marchant, 1830), p. 236.

<sup>122</sup> Both the visitation of Kent in 1663-1668 and Berry list the boys’ birthdates but only give the girls’ birth order, Alice’s dates are therefore less certain than her brothers’; Sir George Armytage, ‘A Visitation of the County of Kent in 1663-1668’, *The Publications of the Harleian Society*, LIV (1895), p. 159.

<sup>123</sup> Berry, *County Genealogies*, p 238.

Dwight in her statue she is not only dead but has achieved the blissful state of salvation. None of the figures has eye contact with one another yet they are united by touch and gesture through a linking chain of hands which extends from Richard's right hand on his son's head, across the children through to Anne's left hand on Susanna's shoulder, perhaps indicating their unity in grief.

The triangular composition reaches its apex at Richard Streatfeild's head which is turned at an angle to his body, his gaze leading the viewer's eye to the top right-hand corner of the picture, past but not directly at, a cracked, faceted, half ruined pillar on which are piled four skulls. Classical-style pillars, sometimes cracked or covered with vegetation, are typical of Dobson's work and common in portraits of the period, here, they may simultaneously represent the perilous nature of the royalist cause combined with a sense of grief. The skulls, as discussed above, were relatively common *memento mori* symbols in portraits of protestant families and intended as expressions of grief designed to encourage the contemplation of mortality and need for repentance.

The empty area between the pillar and the curtain places the group in an unsettling space which is neither inside nor outside and hovers between naturalism and artifice. The astonishing beauty and delicacy with which the faces of the parents are depicted and their stoic expressions, contrasts with this unfocussed background to highlight the obvious sadness of the composition, lending it an intense quality which demonstrates Dobson's skill in depicting emotion (Fig. 6:30). When the whole canvas is viewed close-up, its unfinished nature becomes apparent and the sketchy and hasty brushwork, which is almost scrubbed on in places, further emphasises the melancholy mood, while the areas of raw canvas add to the prevailing tone of hasty and incomplete work.



Figure 6:30 William Dobson, *Portrait of a Family*, c. 1645, (detail)

The canvas has been visibly patched by a wide strip down the centre and to the left of the figure of Richard Streatfeild and there is no doubt that the modelling of the figures of the children is quite different from Dobson's usual style and much less accomplished, something which supports Roger's view that the figures of the children and work on the extra canvas was executed by another artist.<sup>124</sup> If this portrait was painted during Dobson's years in Oxford, scarcity of both money and materials could account for the bare patches of canvas and perhaps the crudely added strip was necessary to complete it.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Richard Jeffree, 'Dobson, William', in *Oxford Art Online*, ed. by Grove Art Online (Online: Oxford University Press, 2007 — 2013.) Accessed September 13<sup>th</sup> 2013; Warner and Alexander, *This Other Eden*: p. 32; The seam of this strip runs down his arm, separating the figures of the two children on the left from the rest of the canvas, indicating that the composition was modified or added to at some stage. Malcolm Rogers suggests that the figures of the children, on the extra canvas, were painted by a different artist, but that Dobson probably added the strip himself after having designed the composition. Rogers *William Dobson 1611-46*, p. 65.

<sup>125</sup> Rogers, *William Dobson*, p.18.

## Chapter Six: conclusion

This case study has drawn attention to an apparent paradox, that while the deaths of children was a relatively common event in family life and frequently recorded in sculpted monuments in church and in textual sources, very few examples of painted post-mortem memorial portraits survive from domestic contexts. This may literally be a matter of survival, since families may not have wished to preserve portraits on such a melancholy subject, particularly after the memory of the dead child had faded. The paucity of such portraits is unlikely to be due to lack of parental affection for their children or absence of grief at their deaths, as extensive textual sources record the near desolation of some parents at the loss of their children.<sup>126</sup> Lawrence Stone's seminal book on the family in which he concluded that affection within families rarely emerged before the early-modern period has been challenged by subsequent scholars who point to a range of sources and studies which indicate that affection was a feature of family life from earlier periods.<sup>127</sup> The post-mortem portraits discussed here, together with effigies, inscriptions and writing which do record the deaths of children point to a universal sense of grief and loss, assuaged somewhat by faith.

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<sup>126</sup> For example *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington*, records desolation at the death of his daughter.

<sup>127</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (1990); Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Macfarlane, Alan *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman : An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1970).

## THESIS CONCLUSION

This thesis has for the first time, identified the portraits of family groups commissioned by members of the English provincial gentry between *c.* 1550 and *c.* 1680 as a genre worthy of academic study. By integrating analysis of their composition and scrutiny of their iconography with textual sources from family and regional archives it contributes to studies of early-modern gentry status and identity, showing that the way in which families fashioned their images was central to the achievement and recognition of high status. Since the family was the place where identity was formed and ideology learned, these portraits provide an especially rich source of evidence for the study of social and religious change, establishing family narratives and acting as sites of memory.<sup>1</sup> In a period of intense social competition, the commissioning of a portrait was itself to engage in an elite practice which linked past and future generations to their land, country house, wealth, piety and prestige. While the thesis collated a body of almost seventy portraits it is not intended as a comprehensive catalogue, but aims to cast new light on the ways in which these works provided a barometer of social change during a period of intense and rapid transformation. It argues that portraits allowed for the performance of gender, status, wealth reputation and faith as well as family roles and relationships, producing idealised images, or exemplars, designed to inform and educate future generations.

By focussing on portraits of family groups, this thesis responds to a gap in the historiography left by scholars such as Robert Tittler and Tarnya Cooper, who established that the vernacular portraits of individuals and married couples commissioned by patrons below

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<sup>1</sup> Astri Erll, 'Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42 (2011), pp. 303-18.

the ranks of the aristocracy are a rich and important research area.<sup>2</sup> It is argued that while portraits of gentry families no doubt had personal and private meanings for particular family members, they also display messages about the values and priorities of gentry families more generally and therefore this study also contributes to scholarship on the early-modern family.<sup>3</sup> Identifying these values and priorities and relating them to the portraits, dictated both the structure of the thesis and the choice of appropriate case studies.

The Introduction sets out the framework for study and defines some important concepts and ideas, particularly the notions of ‘collective identity’ and ‘self-fashioning’, drawing particular attention to the belief that portraits had a close relationship with the construction of gender and rank which framed the strict hierarchical nature of early-modern family life, determining the place of individuals both within the family and wider society. Chapter One looked at the distinctive and, at first glance, limited pictorial vocabulary of the portraits, which traditional art-historical accounts often dismissed as ‘naïve’, contrasting them with the more naturalistic continental styles which were popular with both the art market and scholars. Far from dismissing the qualities of provincial portraits, this thesis draws attention to their delicacy and to the accurate, fluctuating and distinctive ways in which family ideology and relationships are depicted. It shows that artists and patrons collaborated to produce

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<sup>2</sup> For example: Robert Tittler, *Portraits, Painters, and Publics in Provincial England, 1540-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012); Roy Strong, ‘Forgotten Faces: Regional History and Regional Portraiture’, *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), pp. 43-57.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Berry and Foyster Elizabeth, *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families : In Early Modern England* (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2004); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1994); Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984).

portraits with a painterly vocabulary which was precise yet adaptable, changing through time as the priorities of the families changed, producing works of great complexity and even drama.

Chapter One engages with questions of patronage, process and place and begins by focussing on the ways in which material and stylistic changes describe the fluid ideals of status and the malleable nature of the family. It describes how provincial patrons and artists gradually absorbed the techniques and styles of named continental artists, moving away from the formal style and narrow colour palette of the regional ‘heraldic schools’ to fashion their identities in line with fashionable styles. This chapter also draws attention to some of the uses to which patrons put their portraits, including as gifts and heirlooms and stresses the common practice of copying as an affordable way for gentry families to strengthen their networks of similarly ranked families, mimic the aristocracy and for artists to meet the high demand for their work. The commissioning and collecting practices of the gentry are illuminated by a rare portrait inventory from Cheshire and a collection of letters between an artist and his patron. The fortuitous survival of the letters illustrates the complex financial transactions and personal relationships behind the process of patronage drawing attention to the ways in which composition, content and colour were negotiated between artists, patrons and sitters. The Utkinton inventory is particularly helpful in illustrating the ways in which the portraits’ hanging schemes mimicked the hierarchical nature of the gentry household showing how portraits of senior family members were hung in the most prestigious reception rooms and portraits of close relatives in more private areas such as bedchambers. This important inventory demonstrates how portrait collections drew members of the Crewe’s wider family together by displaying portraits of grandparents, cousins and wider kin in the same domestic



spaces, reinforcing family bonds and relationships. It also shows how the practice of copying was used to claim high status by aligning families with their county elite.

The subsequent chapters form the core of the thesis and develop its main ideas, focussing on the specific ideological concerns which the portraits articulate. These chapters are each supported by two or three case studies where the portraits are analysed in close detail.

Chapters Two and Three relate to the family unit. Chapter Two discusses portraits of 'ideal' nuclear families which consisted of either one or two parents with one or more child. This chapter demonstrates how marriage was commonly represented as at the core of family life and seen as a sign of maturity for both men and women. This chapter also draws attention to the ways in which mutuality and unity were represented as important values in ideal families. A key finding in this section is the large numbers of portraits which represent mothers alone with their children. It is argued that these were a way for husbands to 'display' or 'present' their wives and children to the world, and that despite his absence in the frame, these portraits still conform to patriarchal norms. While portraits depict motherhood as wives' primary duty, it also argues that women claimed authority within marriage through representations of their piety and idealised femininity. The ambitious programme of commissioning by Sir Thomas and Lady Alice Lucy for example, shows how Alice's pious identity was consistently conflated with her representations as a mother. Female authority outside the domestic sphere is not represented in any of the portraits selected here, even where a woman was able to forge a semi-autonomous role outside the family, as for example in the case of Jane Burdett. It uses the rarely studied Burdett portrait in the second case study in this chapter to demonstrate how complex patterns and mirroring of posture and costume produced a study in family unity and harmony, reinforced by the unique detail of a fine chain which binds the group together.

Chapter two also examines the performance of intergenerational relationships between parents and children also conformed to societal norms with parents always depicted in superior positions to their children. The representation of relationships between brothers and sisters also conformed to accepted norms throughout the period and brothers are often depicted as having a controlling or caring relationship with their sisters as for example in the Saltonstall portrait. The family heir is generally singled out for specific treatment which draws attention to his important role in the future of the family, this is done using a variety of props and gestures including, in the case of Spencer Lucy, a bowl of ripe fruit which he carries into the family group. Evidently the production of an heir was seen as a joint parental responsibility, since both mothers and fathers are frequently depicted using the familiar gesture of laying a hand on the shoulder or head of their oldest son. Portraits, it is argued, were an important part of the process which both produced and enforced these ideal models of family life.

Chapter Three moves from discussions of the nuclear family unit to examine portraits of the wider, non-nuclear family, investigating images of step-families and wider kin, including the important but under-investigated portraits of grandparents with their grandchildren. This is suggested as a subject for further research, since despite their apparent neglect in the historiography, grandparents played an important part in family life as indicated by their representation in a number of family groups and in a variety of documentary sources.

In the fiercely competitive atmosphere of the period, questions of family status were of profound importance to the gentry and this is the subject of Chapter Four. The desire for status to be recognised is a central theme in almost all the portraits and represented in complex ways which chart its changeable nature; for this reason, this chapter is divided into two sections.

The period before about 1640, it argues was a time when high status was generally represented in portraits through long lineage in the form of heraldry which was the chief means of displaying high status in the earlier portraits. After about 1640 an emphasis on virtuous achievement replaced heraldry and demonstrations of good taste, refined manners and life style became important signifiers of status.

The subject of Chapter Five is the centrality of faith and its importance in the fashioning of family identity. In order to demonstrate the role of portraits in expressing familial piety it selects three families with differing religious stances for close examination; these are the catholic Towneleys, the presbyterian Chorleys and a family divided along religious lines, the Markhams. By juxtaposing these families and their portraits, this chapter argues for their significance in the material culture of post-Reformation history. The portraits' functions it claims, range from objects of devotion, through to a portrait which combines piety with commercialism. The textual sources which support this chapter show that, in contrast to the divisions apparent in the portraits, families were generally tolerant of religious division.

Chapter Six examines the centrality of faith in creating a degree of independent identity for wives and mothers, taking as its subject 'Death and Memorialisation'. This draws attention to group of portraits of post or peri-mortem wives and mothers to explore the ways in which their deaths were used to valorise their memories. The case studies which support this chapter re-evaluate two well-known and nationally important portraits offering a new interpretation of *The Saltonstall Family* through close reading of textual sources, and a partial reassessment of the portrait of *Sir Thomas Aston at the Deathbed of his Wife* which pays attention to its iconographic detail and biblical texts. This chapter concludes with a short discussion of the common death of children and focusses on one unusual memorial portrait to a dead child. This

is the complex and apparently tragic portrait of the Streatfeild family from Kent, the death of whose young daughter Susanna is confirmed by textual sources, but whose other-worldly appearance and dress suggest their belief that she is resurrected in the family. These details indicate the family's strong protestant faith and belief in the ability of children to attain salvation.

This thesis argues that despite their diversity the English gentry were united as a social group through the elusive qualities of 'gentility', a code which combined attributes such as learning, long lineage, virtuous action and piety.<sup>4</sup> Portraits provided a mechanism for socially aspirational, as well as established, families within the ranks of the gentry and were one of the related cultural practices such as collecting, house-building and even posture and gesture which shaped the appearance of gentility and expressed legitimacy.<sup>5</sup>

Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes note the durability of the English gentry as a social group despite years of social and economic turbulence.<sup>6</sup> The portraits discussed in this thesis reflect this durability, recording that the families at its heart were consistent in their values and aspirations despite fluctuations in individual fortunes. Their consistency is reflected in their unchanging concern with economic security and the continuation of the family through male inheritance. The portraits are also remarkably consistent in the way gendered roles in the family remained unchanged over many years, with women depicted as wives, mothers and grandmothers, and girls as sisters and potential marriage partners, always subservient to, and

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<sup>4</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*; Pointon, Marcia, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, *The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, pp. 381-382.

dependent on their male relatives despite the emphasis in some portraits on mutuality in marriage.

In contrast to these consistent features, there remain contradictions, because the portraits also reflect a high level of fluctuation as family fortunes changed and families moved up and down the social ladder. For some families like the Tasburghs, (Fig. 0:2) their portrait marked the peak of their fortunes, before they lost their wealth and status, while for others, like the Burdetts (Fig. 2:29) it records a moment in their upward progress towards the ranks of the aristocracy. While the portraits reflect broad social trends and conventions they also contain private messages about the lives and relationships of individual families and are specific to their own particular place and time. As the thematic chapters show, familial identity, beliefs, ideas about death and status were as idiosyncratic as the narratives and memories embedded in the portraits themselves.

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